Objects, Qualities, and Attributes as Deities in the Ancient Near East

Jennifer Singletary

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For Dad and Sally, with love

And some say that it [the soul] has been mixed with the universe, and it is from this concept, perhaps, that Thales thought all things are full of gods.

ARISTOTLE, *De anima* 411a7 (trans. Laura Marshall)

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Many have made this book possible, but any remaining flaws are mine alone.

Bellefonte, PA
November 2024

Abbreviations

ABD	Freedman, David Noel, ed. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ABL	Harper, Robert Francis. *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters: Belonging to the Kouyunik Collections of the British Museum*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1892–1914.
ABRL	Anchor (Yale) Bible Reference Library
ADD	agency detection device
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums/Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
AJSL	*American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*
ALASP	Abhandlungen zur Literatur Alt-Syrien-Palästinas und Mesopotamiens
AMD	Ancient Magic and Divination
ANE	Ancient Near East
ANEM	Ancient Near Eastern Monographs
ANESSup	Ancient Near Eastern Studies Supplement Series
AnOr	Analecta Orientalia
AnSt	*Anatolian Studies*
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ARES	Archivi Reali di Ebla, Studi
ARET	Archivi Reali di Ebla, Texti
ARM	Archives royales de Mari
ArOr	*Archív orientální*
ARRIM	*Annual Review of the Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Project*
ARW	*Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*
AS	Assyriological Studies
AT	Wiseman, D.J. *The Alalakh Tablets*. Occasional Publications of the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara 2. London: British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, 1953.
ATT	Alalakh Excavation Text number
AUCT	Andrews University Cuneiform Texts
AuOrSup	Aula Orientalis Supplementa
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BagM	*Baghdader Mitteilungen*
BAH	Bibliothèque archéologique et historique
BARIS	BAR International Series
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*

BBVO	Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient
BCAW	Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World
Bib	*Biblica*
BIN	Babylonian lnscriptions in the Collection of J.B. Nies
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BJSUCSD	Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego
BM	Museum siglum of the British Museum, London
BMS	King, Leonard W. *Babylonian Magic and Sorcery: Being "the Prayers of the Lifting of the Hand."* London: Luzac, 1896.
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CBS	Catalogue of the Babylonian Section University Museum, Philadelphia
CDOG	Colloquium der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
CM	Cuneiform Monographs
CNIP	Carsten Niebuhr Institute Publications
ConBOT	Coniectanea Biblica, Old Testament Series
CQR	*Church Quarterly Review*
CRAI	*Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*
CrStHB	Critical Studies in the Hebrew Bible
CSR	cognitive science of religion
CT	*Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum*. London: British Museum, 1896–.
DDD	Toorn, Karel van der, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, eds. *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*. 2nd ed. Leiden: Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
DN	divine name
DP	Allotte de la Fuÿe, Maurice F. *Documents présargoniques*. Paris: Leroux, 1908–1920.
ÉBib	Études bibliques, NS
ED	Early Dynastic
EPRO	Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FM	Florilegium Marianum
GMTR	Guides to the Mesopotamian Textual Record
GN	geographical name
GOF.Ä	Göttinger Orientforschungen Reihe 4, Ägypten
HCCT-E	Hirayama Cuneiform Collection Texts—Emar
HCS	Hellenistic Culture and Society
HdO	Handbuch der Orientalistik

HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
IOS	Israel Oriental Studies
JANER	*Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism*
JSSSup	Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement
K	Museum siglum of the British Museum in London (Kuyunjik)
KA	Kuntillet ʿAjrud
KAI	Donner, Herbert, and Wolfgang Röllig. *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*. 3 vols. Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 1969–1973.
KAV	Schroeder, Ottop. *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur verschiedenen Inhalts*. WVDOG 35. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1920.
KTU	Dietrich, Manfried, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín, eds. *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit*. 3rd enl. ed. AOAT 360. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2013.
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
Lie *Sar*.	Lie, Arthur Gotfred. *The Inscriptions of Sargon II, King of Assyria*. Paris: Geuthner, 1929.
LKU	Falkenstein, Adam. *Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Uruk*. Berlin: Vorderasiatische Abteilung der Staatlichen Museen, 1931.
MAD	Materials for the Assyrian Dictionary
MC	Mesopotamian Civilizations
MEE	Materiali epigrafici di Ebla
MRS	Mission de Ras Shamra
MVAG	Mitteilungen der vorderasiatisch-ägyptischen Gesellschaft
NBC	Nies Babylonian Collection, siglum of the Yale Babylonian Collection
NCBT	Siglum of the Newell Collection of Babylonian Tablets (now Yale University)
NEA	*Near Eastern Archaeology*
OBO	Oribis Biblicus et Orientalis
OCM	Oxford Classical Monographs
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OLZ	*Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*
Or	*Orientalia* NS
OrAnt	*Oriens Antiquus*

pers. comm.	personal communication
PET	Krebernick, Manfred. *Die Personennamen der Ebla-Texte: Eine Zwischenbilanz*. BBVO 7. Berlin: Reimer, 1988.
PIHANS	Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul
PN	personal name
PTS	Tablet siglum of the collection of the Princeton Theological Seminary
RHR	*Revue de l'histoire des religions*
RlA	Ebeling, Erich, et al., eds. *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*. 15 vols. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1928–2018.
RSO	Ras Shamra-Ougarit
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAAB	*State Archives of Assyria Bulletin*
SAALT	State Archives of Assyria Literary Texts
SANER	Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SCCNH	Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians
Sem	*Semitica*
SERAPHIM	Studies in Education and Religion in Ancient and Pre-Modern History in the Mediterranean and Its Environs
SF	Deimel, Anton. *Schultexte aus Fara*. WVDOG 43. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1923.
SMEA	*Studi micenei ed egeo-anatolici*
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Studies Monograph Series
StOr	Studia Orientalia
StPohl	Studia Pohl
TA	*Tel Aviv*
TAD	Porten, Bezalel, and Ada Yardeni. *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt*. 4 vols. Jerusalem: Hebrew University; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1986.
TCL	Textes cunéiformes, Musées du Louvre
TM	Tell Mardikh siglum
ToMM	theory of mind mechanism
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
UBL	Ugaritisch-biblische Literatur
UCP	University of California Publications in Semitic Philology
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*
VAB	Vorderasiatische Bibliothek
VE	*Vocabolario di Ebla*. MEE 4.
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum

WAW	Writings from the Ancient World
WAWSup	Writings from the Ancient World Supplement Series
WO	*Die Welt des Orients*
WTay	Inscription from Taymāʾ
YBC	Tablet siglum, Yale Babylonian Collection
YOS	Yale Oriental Series
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*
ZABR	*Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*

CHAPTER 1

Gods, Deities, and the Superhuman

What, according to the evidence from the ancient Near East, is a god?[1] Superhuman beings appear in a dizzying variety of ways across the textual and material records of Mesopotamia, the Levant, Egypt, and Anatolia. As the diversity, fluidity, and multiplicity of conceptions of the divine evinced by these sources has become increasingly recognized, this question has become more and more challenging to answer.[2] Even at a single site during a single period, different genres of texts may focus on different deities, reflecting the preoccupations of different groups.[3] Moreover, the sheer quantity of deities adds to the complexity. Though the Hittites are famous for boasting of "the thousand gods of Hatti,"[4] thousands more deities are attested elsewhere.[5] Due to the limitations

1 A number of recent works address this important question, including Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Barbara Nevling Porter, ed., *What Is a God? Anthropomorphic and Non-anthropomorphic Aspects of Deity in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009); Beate Pongratz-Leisten, "Divine Agency and Astralization of the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Reconsidering the Concept of Revolutionary Monotheism*, ed. Beate Pongratz-Leisten (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 137–187; Spencer L. Allen, *The Splintered Divine: A Study of Ištar, Baal, and Yahweh Divine Names and Divine Multiplicity in the Ancient Near East*, SANER 5 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015); and Michael Hundley, *Yahweh among the Gods: The Divine in Genesis, Exodus, and the Ancient Near East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022). This book uses "ancient Near East" to describe this region in keeping with this series; however, the author notes that this term could profitably be replaced by more geographically oriented alternatives, such as ancient West Asia and North Africa or the Eastern Mediterranean. All ancient dates in this book refer to BCE unless otherwise stated.

2 On the multiplicity and/or fluidity of deities in the ancient Near East, see Erik Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many* (Ithaka, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982); Barbara Nevling Porter, ed., *One God or Many? Concepts of Divinity in the Ancient World*, Transactions of the Casco Bay Assyriological Institute 1 (Chebeague, ME: Casco Bay Assyriological Institute, 2000); Benjamin D. Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Allen, *Splintered Divine*; Tyson L. Putthoff, *Gods and Humans in the Ancient Near East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Thomas Galoppin et al., eds., *Naming and Mapping the Gods in the Ancient Mediterranean: Spaces, Mobilities, Imaginaries*, 2 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2022).

3 Gonzalo Rubio, "Gods and Scholars: Mapping the Pantheon in Early Mesopotamia," in *Reconsidering the Concept of Revolutionary Monotheism*, ed. Beate Pongratz-Leisten (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 109.

4 Itamar Singer, "'The Thousand Gods of Hatti': The Limits of an Expanding Pantheon," in *Concepts of the Other in Near Eastern Religions*, ed. Ilai Alon, Ithamar Gruenwald, and Itamar Singer, IOS 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 81, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004659360_006.

5 For a listing of ANE deities, see the catalogue in Douglas R. Frayne and Johanna H. Stuckey, *A*

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of the extant sources, which often, though not exclusively, present the viewpoints of elite men and state-sponsored religious practice and ideology, the full catalogue of ancient Near Eastern deities may never be known.

Most frequently, deities are described in texts from the ancient Near East as having humanlike forms, though this does not necessarily entail a conception of material bodies that are completely identical to human bodies in either form or substance. For example, anthroform gods and goddesses in the ancient Near East are sometimes described as inhabiting highly corporeal bodies that are indistinguishable from humans, and other times with exaggerated or extraordinary features, such as enormous size or brilliant luminosity, or even as noncorporeal. One and the same deity may be described in all of these ways, as well as others, in different contexts. However, especially in the striking portrayals of mythological and literary texts, gods and goddesses are often presented as gendered figures whose basic silhouettes are similar to humans,[6] even if their size, substance, or the capacity for fluidity and multiplicity of their bodies is sometimes quite different.[7] They are depicted wearing crowns on top of their coiffures, battling for power with arms and hands that wield the weapons of war, and engaging in sexual relations with each other, or occasionally with humans, utilizing the appropriate anatomical parts to do so. These vivid portrayals have inspired a number of recent studies that take anthroform representations of deities in the ancient Near East, and especially in certain portions of the Hebrew Bible, seriously.[8]

Handbook of Gods and Goddesses of the Ancient Near East: Three Thousand Deities of Anatolia, Syria, Israel, Sumer, Babylonia, Assyria, and Elam (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2021).

6 Note that deities are not always clearly gendered, and gender identity may also be fluid for some deities.

7 See, for example, Mark S. Smith's discussion of the "natural," superhumanly large, and "cosmic" or "mystical" bodies of Yahweh. Smith, *Where the Gods Are: Spatial Dimensions of Anthropomorphism in the Biblical World*, ABRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 13–30.

8 See the work of Mark S. Smith: *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*; "The Structure of Divinity at Ugarit and Israel: The Case of Anthropomorphic Deities versus Monstrous Divinities," in *Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion*, ed. Gary Beckman and Theodore J. Lewis, BJS 346 (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006), 38–63; "Ugaritic Anthropomorphism, Theomorphism, Theriomorphism," in *Göttliche Körper—Göttliche Gefühle: Was leisten anthropomorphe und anthropapathische Götterkonzepte im Alten Orient und Alten Testament?*, ed. Andreas Wagner, OBO 270 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 117–140; and *Where the Gods Are*. See also Esther Hamori, *"When Gods Were Men": The Embodied God in Biblical and Near Eastern Literature*, BZAW 384 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008); Sommer, *Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel*; Andreas Wagner, *God's Body: The Anthropomorphic God in the Old Testament* (London: T&T Clark, 2019), trans. of *Gottes Körper: Zur alttestamentlichen Vorstellung der Menschengestaltigkeit Gottes* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2010); Michael B. Hundley, *Gods in Dwellings: Temples and Divine*

While many gods and goddesses are described in more-or-less humanlike guises, at least in some contexts, these same deities could appear in far less anthropoid configurations in other milieux. For example, some of the earliest archaic tablets from Uruk identify the goddess Inana with the planet Venus as it appears in specific positions in the sky; she is also depicted visually as both a voluptuous woman and as a pair of tasseled poles or posts.[9] The Assyrian god Aššur is portrayed in a second-millennium relief as a mountain capped with the torso and face of a bearded man.[10] This deity also occurs in theophoric personal names equated with both a fortress and a divine mountain, suggesting that Aššur could be perceived as both humanlike and as a feature of the built or natural landscape.[11] Such examples are not limited to Mesopotamia. From Egypt to Anatolia, deities that appear in human form in some instances could also be represented elsewhere in a wide range of other ways: for example, as theriomorphic or hybrid creatures, or identified with astronomical bodies, natural features of the landscape, agricultural products, objects, or even specific types of metal or wood.[12]

Intriguingly, evidence from across the ancient Near East also reveals that a variety of manufactured objects, such as movables (furniture, weapons) and architectural structures or their constituent parts (temples, gates), as well as more abstract qualities and attributes, were also treated as deities in certain cases, with no sign that they were represented as anthropoid in form. Prod-

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Presence in the Ancient Near East, WAWSup 3 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013); Anne K. Knafl, *Forming God: Divine Anthropomorphism in the Pentateuch*, Siphrut 12 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014); Peter Machinist, "Anthropomorphism in Mesopotamian Religion," in Wagner, *Göttliche Körper—Göttliche Gefühle*, 67–100; and Francesca Stavrakopoulou, *God: An Anatomy* (New York: Knopf, 2022).

9 Machinist, "Anthropomorphism in Mesopotamian Religion," 76, 80; Gebhard J. Selz, "On the Beginnings of Mesopotamian 'Theology,'" in *Des polythéismes aux monothéismes: Mélanges d'assyriologie offerts à Marcel Sigrist*, ed. Uri Gabbay and Jean-Jacques Pérennès, ÉBib 82 (Leuven: Peeters, 2020), 415–418.

10 Vorderasiatisches Museum Berlin, VA Ass 1358.

11 Such theophoric personal names include Aššur-duri, "(the god) Aššur is my fortress," and Aššur-šaddî-ili, "(the god) Aššur is a divine mountain." Karen Radner, *Ancient Assyria: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 11. See also W.G. Lambert on the origin of this deity as the deified crag that housed his temple. Lambert, "The God Aššur," *Iraq* 45, no. 1 (1983): 82–86, https://doi.org/10.2307/4200181.

12 For examples, see Trevor Bryce, *Life and Society in the Hittite World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 134–162; Richard H. Wilkinson, "Anthropomorphic Deities," in *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, ed. Jacco Dieleman and Willeke Wendrich (Los Angeles, 2008), https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5s54w4tc; Barbara Nevling Porter, "Introduction," in Porter, *What Is a God*, 4–6; Machinist, "Anthropomorphism in Mesopotamian Religion," 74–75.

ucts made by human (or humanlike) artifice, including cultic paraphernalia and musical instruments, as well as abstract qualities, such as holiness, and attributes, such as divine names, are attested in deity lists, offering records, ritual texts, prayers, and theophoric personal names across the region, ranging in date from the Early Bronze Age through the Persian period. Such entities sometimes occur with special orthographic markers that indicate divinity. For example, the use of the divine determinative in Sumerian, Akkadian, Egyptian, Hittite, and Luwian texts is generally understood to indicate that the noun it precedes or follows is a deity (or closely related to deities).[13] Particular terminology is also used to describe these entities, such as nouns usually understood to mean *deity* in various languages, or parallelism with such nouns. They are also recorded as the recipients of a variety of acts of religious attention, including offerings of animals or agricultural produce, hymns and prayers, and rituals such as naming or mouth-opening. In addition, they are sometimes explicitly cast as agents fulfilling superhuman roles in the lives of human beings, such as guarantors of oaths.

Despite the appearance of nonanthroform deities in sources from across the ancient Near East, this phenomenon has received comparatively little attention thus far. The evidence from Mesopotamia has received the most treatment.[14] In addition, several scholars have investigated the possibility that objects, qualities, and/or attributes are included among the deities attested in the Judean

13 The significance (and ambiguity) of the use of the divine determinative is discussed further below.

14 Studies that address nonanthroform deities in Mesopotamia include: Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978); W.G. Lambert, "Ancient Mesopotamian Gods: Superstition, Philosophy, Theology," *RHR* 207, no. 2 (1990): 115–130, https://doi.org/10.3406/rhr.1990.1735; Gebhard J. Selz, "'The Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp': Towards an Understanding of the Problems of Deification in Third Millennium Mesopotamia," in *Sumerian Gods and Their Representations*, ed. Irving L. Finkel and Markham J. Geller, CM 7 (Groningen: Styx, 1997), 167–209; Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian Period*, CM 23 (Leiden: Brill/Styx, 2003), 351–368; Barbara Nevling Porter, "Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum: Were There Non-anthropomorphic Deities in Ancient Mesopotamia?," in Porter, *What Is a God*, 153–194; and Porter, "Feeding Dinner to a Bed: Reflections on the Nature of Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia," *SAAB* 15 (2006): 307–331. John Curtis Franklin analyzes attestations of the divinized lyre and other divinized instruments in ancient Mesopotamia. Franklin, *Kinyras: The Divine Lyre*, Hellenic Studies 70 (Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2015), 19–42. For further discussion of much of the same evidence, see also Michael B. Hundley, "Divinized Instruments and Divine Music: A Study in Occasional Deification," *JNES* 82, no. 1 (2023): 119–132, https://doi.org/10.1086/723965. These studies are discussed in depth in the following chapter.

archives of Elephantine in the Persian period.[15] Examples from various corpora are also occasionally addressed in passing or as part of an overview of the range of deities in a particular area or corpus.[16] However, few studies have attempted to deeply consider the range of such exemplars across the larger context of the ancient Near East.[17]

Given the powerful and memorable portrayals of deities as anthroform beings in many ancient Near Eastern texts, it is little wonder that the gods and goddesses who are described as actors and actresses in the midst of the great dramatic scenes of myth and literature often take center stage. These types of deities are, after all, highly relatable. As Peter Machinist points out, "the very supposition that gods can have human form, function, and/or emotions carries with it the consequence that the gods are approachable, can be conversed with or otherwise related to by humans in a substantial, serious, and authentic

15 Examples include *ʾšm-byt'l*, *ḥrm-byt'l*, *ʿnt-byt'l*, *ʿnt-yhw*, *ʾšm*, *byt'l*, *ḥrm*, and *ʿnt*. See William F. Albright, "The Evolution of the West-Semitic Divinity An-Anat-Attâ," *AJSL* 41, no. 2 (1925): 73–101; Bezalel Porten, *Archives from Elephantine: The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); Michael H. Silverman, *Religious Values in the Jewish Proper Names at Elephantine*, AOAT 217 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1985); Karel van der Toorn, "Worshipping Stones: On the Deification of Cult Symbols," *JNSL* 23 (1997): 1–14; van der Toorn, "Anat-Yahu, Some Other Deities, and the Jews of Elephantine," *Numen* 39, no. 1 (1992): 8–11, https://doi.org/10.2307/3270076; van der Toorn, "Ḥerem-Bethel and Elephantine Oath Procedure," *ZAW* 98, no. 2 (1986): 282–285; Saul M. Olyan, *A Thousand Thousands Served Him: Exegesis and the Naming of Angels in Ancient Judaism*, TSAJ 36 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993), 95–96.

16 For example, Frans Wiggermann discusses some examples in which "oath" (*mamītu*) appears to be occasionally deified; Volkert Haas discusses various examples from Hittite texts; Francesco Pomponio and Paolo Xella briefly address a few examples from Ebla; Hundley cites some examples of movable objects, architectural elements, and abstract qualities as part of his survey of the diverse types of deities attested in ancient Near Eastern sources. Wiggermann, "Mischwesen A. Philologish. Mesopotamien," *RlA* 8 (1994): 222 and n. 9; Haas, *Geschichte der Hethitischen Religion*, HdO 15 (Leiden: Brill, 1994); Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla: Études analytique des divinités éblaïtes à l'époque des archives royales du IIIe millénaire*, AOAT 245 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1997); Hundley, *Yahweh among the Gods*.

17 Helmer Ringgren's now outdated study remains one of the only book-length attempts to discuss divinized qualities and functions cross-culturally. Ringgren, *Word and Wisdom: Studies in the Hypostatization of Divine Qualities and Functions in the Ancient Near East* (Lund: Ohlssons, 1947). The concept of hypostasis is deeply problematic, however, as discussed below. Olyan briefly mentions several tantalizing examples of the "pan-Near Eastern tendency to divinize attributes of the gods and items of the cult" in his book on exegesis and the naming of angels in ancient Judaism, but his discussion is necessarily limited to a few pages in which he lists a few examples from Ugarit, personal names in various Northwest Semitic languages, and the evidence from Elephantine (*Thousand Thousands Served Him*, 88–98).

way."[18] Depictions of deities in contemporary media vividly illustrate the far-reaching influence of such presentations. For example, the film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975) and the television series *Supernatural* (2005–2020) emphasize the human-likeness of deities by employing human actors to play their parts. Yet it is crucial to look beyond the more prominent and familiar portrayals of gods and goddesses in anthroform shapes in order to understand the full range of ancient conceptions of deity.[19] Investigating the classification, characteristics, functions, and roles of objects, qualities, and attributes as deities contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the way this category was conceptualized in different environments in the ancient Near East.

1 Gods, Deities, Divinity, and the Superhuman

How do objects, qualities, and attributes fit into the category of DEITY?[20] How do these and other deities fit into the larger category of the SUPERHUMAN? Is a god the same thing as a deity? Before examining the evidence, it is crucial to clarify the categories that will be used to frame this discussion. First, this book uses the term *superhuman* in preference to *supernatural* or *nonobvious beings*, to emphasize superhuman beings' characterization in the ancient sources as active participants in and inhabitants of the natural world. As Martti Nissinen explains,

> The people living in the ancient Eastern Mediterranean world, as far as our sources enable us to know, did not reckon on an absolute chasm between the natural and the supernatural. Everything that happened was "natural" in the sense that "nature" belonged to the domain of the supreme agency of the divine agents whose capabilities, if not absolutely unlimited in every case, clearly exceeded those of humans. The alleged activity of the divine agents was "superhuman" indeed because of its indefinite capacity, without, therefore, being perceived of as "supernatural."[21]

18 Machinist, "Anthropomorphism in Mesopotamian Religion," 68–69. See also Porter's comments on the prominence of more humanlike deities in the history of scholarship on Mesopotamian religion ("Introduction," 1–4).

19 As also suggested by Pongratz-Leisten, "Divine Agency and Astralization of the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia," 143.

20 Note that when used to designate a category, words are written in small caps in this book, in accordance with the conventions of cognitive linguistics.

21 Nissinen, *Ancient Prophecy: Near Eastern, Biblical, and Greek Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 10.

Similarly, the commonly used term *nonobvious* implies that such beings cannot be seen by humans; yet, in the ancient Near East, deities and other nonhuman entities were also physically present in the seen world in the form of cult statues and other visual depictions. It is also unclear to what extent deified objects, for example, would have existed as specific, visible objects in the human realm. For these reasons, *superhuman* is a preferable term.

Distinguishing between deities and other closely related types of superhuman beings in ancient sources is a challenging task. As a number of scholars have increasingly emphasized, the ancient evidence suggests that the boundaries between deities and other superhuman beings, or even between deities and humans, are fuzzy and porous, rather than clear and distinct.[22] Moreover, there is a growing sense that the category of DEITY is a "relative category," or one in which not all members share the same status or centrality.[23] Previous scholars have noted a lack of consensus concerning what a "real god" is, when it comes to the deities described in the ancient sources.[24] Moreover, the use of the term *god* itself has been recognized as a "thorny issue" in the study of

22 See, for example, Pongratz-Leisten, "Divine Agency and Astralization of the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia"; Machinist, "Anthropomorphism in Mesopotamian Religion"; Gebhard J. Selz, "The Divine Prototypes," in *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond*, ed. Nicole Brisch, OIS 4 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2008), 13–31; Selz, "On the Beginnings of Mesopotamian 'Theology'"; Putthoff, *Gods and Humans in the Ancient Near East*. See also Ilkka Pyysiäinen and Kimmo Ketola, "Rethinking 'God': 'God' as Category in Comparative Religion," in *Approaching Religion: Based on Papers Read at the Symposium on Methodology in the Study of Religions Held at Åbo, Finland, on the 4th–7th August 1997*, ed. Tore Ahlbäck, Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis 17 (Åbo: Donner Institute, 1999), 207–214.

23 This terminology is adopted by Pongratz-Leisten, "Divine Agency and Astralization of the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia," 141; following Ittai Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, OCM (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), 26. See also Beate Pongratz-Leisten and Karen Sonik, "Between Cognition and Culture: Theorizing the Materiality of Divine Agency in Cross-cultural Perspective," in *The Materiality of Divine Agency*, ed. Beate Pongratz-Leisten and Karen Sonik, SANER 8 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), 7, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501502262-006. Similarly, Machinist describes anthropomorphic representations of deity as "primary," based on their relative frequency and prominence ("Anthropomorphism in Mesopotamian Religion," 82). Hundley identifies a continuum in which the "major anthropomorphic deities" represent "the quintessence of divinity," while "other (occasional) deities comprise a borderline category" (*Yahweh among the Gods*, 20–21).

24 Porter addresses this issue: "When a particular participant [in the conference she hosted and the edited volume based on it] used the word 'god,' for example, or argued that something was not a 'real god' did he or she (in each case) mean the word 'god' as we, the modern observers, understand that term (and if so, how *do* we understand that term?) or as ancient Mesopotamians understood it?" ("Introduction," 11, emphasis original).

ancient Near Eastern religions.[25] In her edited volume *What Is a God?*, Barbara Porter attributes much of the difficulty modern scholars have in understanding the evidence for deified objects from Mesopotamia to a difference in what is meant by the English word *god* and what is meant by the Sumerian and Akkadian terms dingir and *ilu*.[26] As Porter rightly points out, "This modern Assyriological translation of the native terms … is problematic because it has encouraged Assyriologists to impose all the baggage of a modern Western cultural concept on an ancient Mesopotamian cultural concept that appears to have been in some ways significantly different."[27] She suggests that scholars need to adjust their definition, widening it beyond the type of deities with which many scholars are most familiar (i.e., humanlike gods and goddesses) in order to accommodate the ancient evidence. As she argues, "Our idea of gods as they occur in a Mesopotamian context must be flexible enough to accommodate a goddess like Ishtar, who is described not only as a living person but also as a planet … and broad enough to encompass the concept of thrones and crowns (not persons at all) as appropriate recipients of divine offerings, as if they too were gods."[28]

This is indeed a step in the right direction. However, problems arise not only from the cultural baggage that the term *god* carries, but also from the common tendency to use the English words *god*, *deity*, and *divinity* both interchangeably as well as in slightly different ways. For example, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines deity as a synonym for the other two terms: a deity is defined as "a divinity, a divine being, a god; one of the gods worshipped by a people or tribe." To add to the confusion, these three terms can also be used in more nuanced ways, though the rationale behind their usage is rarely made explicit. As Porter remarks concerning the contributors to her edited volume, "most of us used the words 'deity' and 'divinities' in our chapters in ways that implied we understand those words to mean something subtly different from the words 'god' and 'gods,' yet none of us ever explicitly addressed the nature of that difference …. And

25 Porter, "Introduction," 11.

26 Nouns in ancient languages are given in the masculine nominative singular (where such distinctions exist), unless otherwise stated. Sumerian is rendered in lower case letters, Akkadian and other Semitic languages are italicized, and logograms and names of signs are given in upper case.

27 Porter, "Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum," 157. She also emphasizes that the terms do partially overlap: "I do mean to suggest that DINGIRs and *ilu*s bore a partial resemblance to 'gods' of other traditions and of modern usage; I do not mean to suggest, however, that 'gods' and *ilu*s are in every way identical" (Porter, "Feeding Dinner to a Bed," 315n37).

28 Porter, "Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum," 158.

we wrestled with whether calling an entity 'divine' implies that it is a god."[29] Machinist makes a similar distinction: he uses the word "deity" "more broadly" and "god" or "goddess" when a deity exhibits physical or functional "anthropomorphism."[30]

Without advocating for monothetic definitions or a strict division between these terms, this book suggests that they should be used more heuristically, in ways that throw certain features into sharper relief. It is important to recognize that the categories outlined here for scholarly use are not explicitly differentiated in the ancient evidence.[31] However, as Alan Lenzi, Christopher Frechette, and Ann Elise Zernecke point out, "it is the prerogative of the interpreter to establish what seem to be productive avenues of cultural interpretation, including how to categorize and organize data so that it will communicate with contemporaries."[32] In keeping with these principles, the chapters that follow use the term *deity* to signal a class within the larger category of superhuman entities that is at least somewhat distinguished in the ancient sources from other superhuman entities, such as monsters, demons, and ghosts. The distinction between deities and other superhuman beings, such as monsters or demons, is frequently hard to suss out in ancient Near Eastern sources, but significant evidence points to these being different, though overlapping categories.[33] As the previous discussion makes clear, what entities fall into (or out of) this category is dependent on context, and these entities may have a variety of features. *God* or *goddess*, on the other hand, are reserved primarily for certain types of deity: specifically, ones that are described as predominantly anthroform, in keeping with the gendered nature of the terms and their use in common parlance. Something is *divine* if it is treated as a deity, and *divinity* is used here to designate the quality of being a deity.

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29 Porter, "Introduction," 12.

30 Machinist, "Anthropomorphism in Mesopotamian Religion," 68.

31 In this sense, these definitions are necessarily and deliberately methodologically reductionistic, in keeping with Russell McCutcheon's suggestion that such second-order or scholarly definitions are always methodologically reductionistic because they are determined by the scholar's own methods/theories, the rules of academic discourse in the field, and the scholar's particular interests. McCutcheon, *Critics Not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion*, SUNY Series: Issues in the Study of Religion (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), x.

32 Lenzi, Frechette, and Zernecke, "Introduction," in *Akkadian Prayers and Hymns: A Reader*, ed. Alan Lenzi, ANEM 3 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 13.

33 Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 27–40; Karen Sonik, "Mesopotamian Conceptions of the Supernatural: A Taxonomy of *Zwischenwesen*," *ARW* 14 no. 1 (2013): 103–116, https://doi.org/10.1515/arege-2012-0007; Machinist, "Anthropomorphism in Mesopotamian Religion."

2 Form, Mind, Agency, and Counterintuitiveness

Anthropomorphism is another scholarly concept that can cause confusion. The term *anthropomorphic* is an ambiguous one that is commonly used to indicate both physical or biological anthropomorphism and psychological anthropomorphism (more properly anthropopathism). As Machinist and others have observed, the meaning of the term *anthropomorphic* is multifaceted.[34] He defines it as having three different meanings:

> Anthropomorphism assumes that the divine is personal: as particular beings that are conceived of and reacted to as persons, not as some "miasma" or "force." To talk about anthropomorphism, then, is essentially to say or to suppose that something that is not obviously human has human aspects. What that means, as the evidence for anthropomorphism in human history appears to show, is one or more of three things:
>
> 1) Physical: the divine being, which we may now call a god, a goddess, or more broadly, a deity, looks like a human or part of a human, is built on the model of a human, including the sexuality of a human. Thus, a particular god is conceived as a vigorous male, with muscles, a heavy beard, limbs, and face and facial features; or, as a goddess, as a particular female, with breasts, vagina, hair on the head arranged in the particular human society's view of female head hair, etc.
> 2) Functional: the god functions as or behaves like a human. For example, male gods and female goddesses can have human-like sexual relations with each other and with human males and females; the gods can form assemblies or monarchic polities, and be given titles that are otherwise used in human affairs.
> 3) Emotional, or what is often called anthropopathic: the deity can feel, have the emotions normally found in humans, like anger, joy, lust, pity. It is this attribution of emotion to deities that constitutes the basis for much human prayer and praise directed toward them.[35]

Similarly, the cognitive scientist Pascal Boyer points out that "anthropomorphizing projections" can include anatomical structure, but also include the projection of other qualities, such as physiological processes, personal identity, social organization, and intentional psychology. Boyer further suggests that

34 Hundley also combines anthropomorphic form and anthropopathic agency and emotion ("Divinized Instruments and Divine Music," 119).

35 Machinist, "Anthropomorphism in Mesopotamian Religion," 67–68.

the projection of intentional psychology is not only the most common anthropomorphizing projection cross-culturally, but is also the most basic: "Projections of psychological properties are more fundamental in the sense that they are almost invariably entailed by other projections, whilst the converse is not always the case."[36]

In other words, though the attribution of humanlike physical features usually entails the projection of humanlike psychological features, the projection of the latter does not necessarily entail the former;[37] in fact, it is frequently the case that only psychological features, such as intention, are ascribed to various entities, without the attribution of humanlike biological or physical features.[38] As Boyer explains, "Projections of human physical features in general result in a projection, tacit or not, of intentional psychology; but a projection of intentional psychology does not generally entail a projection of any other human quality."[39] This study therefore suggests relying on clearer terms. When discussing the characteristics of deities, this book uses the terms *humanlike form*, *anthroform*, or *anthropoid* to indicate shapes that largely resemble human bodies, rather than anthropomorphic. In keeping with this distinction, the terms *anthropopathic* and *humanlike mind* are utilized to distinguish emotional or cognitive features that resemble those of humans.

It is important to note that there are also differences between anthropopathism and the attribution of humanlike mentality and the attribution of agency, despite the fact that these are often conflated.[40] Anthropopathism and the attribution of humanlike mind imply that specifically humanlike qualities are being ascribed to something nonhuman, whether emotional or mental.

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36 Pascal Boyer, "What Makes Anthropomorphism Natural: Intuitive Ontology and Cultural Representations," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 2, no. 1 (1996): 89–90.

37 See also Pongratz-Leisten and Sonik, "Between Cognition and Culture," 36: They suggest that anthropomorphism "might be extended to signify human-like behaviors, capacities, or other qualities *even in the absence* of human form" (emphasis original).

38 On the relationship between psychological, biological, and physical dimensions of anthropomorphism, see Nicholas J. Shaman, Anondah R. Saide, and Rebekah A. Richert, "Dimensional Structure of and Variation in Anthropomorphic Concepts of God," *Frontiers in Psychology* 9 (2018): 1425, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01425.

39 Boyer, "What Makes Anthropomorphism Natural," 91–92.

40 Shaman, Saide, and Richert, "Dimensional Structure of and Variation in Anthropomorphic Concepts of God," 2. This also applies in the ANE, as Pongratz-Leisten and Sonik point out: "The attribution of such personhood to particular objects or images [e.g., through the *mīs pî* ritual] does not necessarily imply the possession of the complete spectrum of attributes possessed by a human being … but *does* properly intimate a potential to exercise (or to be perceived as exercising) agency in specific contexts" ("Between Cognition and Culture," 12–13, emphasis original).

Agency, on the other hand, entails features that are not necessarily specifically humanlike, such as the capacity for self-propulsion by an internal force, teleological action in pursuit of goals, the capacity to react and interact, and the possession of cognitive capacities such as thinking and the ability to recognize other agents.[41] Agency is sometimes also specified as the capacity for "*socially effective action*."[42] Not all agents possess all of these capacities. According to this definition, some nonhumans can also be considered agents: for example, animals and some forms of artificial intelligence technology also possess some of these qualities. Some scholars have suggested that agency can also apply to objects.[43] Agency is thus not necessarily specifically humanlike, but rather entails animacy. However, agency can be further specified as being humanlike, and often is, especially since humans are the prototypical agents with whom humans are most familiar.[44] For example, the attribution of benevolence or reciprocal agency, which is implied by the giving of gifts, is a humanlike form of agency.

Recent research suggests that the attribution of specifically humanlike qualities to agents, such as superhuman beings, is influenced by several factors, including "the accessibility and applicability of egocentric or homocentric knowledge (elicited agent knowledge), the motivation to be effective social agents (effectance motivation), and the motivation for social connection (sociality motivation)."[45] In other words, when people have knowledge from their own experience and their experience of other humans, when they are motivated to reduce uncertainty concerning the behavior of nonhuman agents and are incentivized to understand and predict their behavior, and/or when they have a need for social connection, they will tend to attribute more human-

41 Ilkka Pyysiäinen, *How Religion Works: Towards a New Cognitive Science of Religion*, Cognition and Culture 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 4, 9; Alan M. Leslie, "ToMM, ToBy, and Agency: Core Architecture and Domain Specificity," in *Mapping the Mind: Domain Specificity in Cognition and Culture*, ed. Lawrence A. Hirschfeld and Susan A. Gelman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 119–148.

42 Sophy Downes, "Agency," in *A Companion to Ancient Near Eastern Art*, ed. Ann C. Gunter, BCAW (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2019), 349 (emphasis original).

43 See, most famously, Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998). Regarding the agency of objects in the ancient Near East, see Marian H. Feldman, "Object Agency? Spatial Perspective, Social Relations, and the Stele of Hammurabi," in *Agency and Identity in the Ancient Near East: New Paths Forward*, ed. Sharon R. Steadman and Jennifer C. Ross (London: Equinox, 2010), 148–165; Downes, "Agency."

44 Nicholas Epley, Adam Waytz, and John T. Cacioppo, "On Seeing Human: A Three-Factor Theory of Anthropomorphism," *Psychological Review* 114, no. 4 (2007): 864, 868, https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295x.114.4.864.

45 Epley, Waytz, and Cacioppo, "On Seeing Human," 878.

like qualities to agents. These factors, which function synergistically, are also influenced by a variety of dispositional, situational, developmental, and cultural variables. Moreover, agents that are perceived as either threatening or helpful to people's well-being may be attributed more humanlike qualities.[46] Thus, a distinction should be made between humanlike agency and general agency, a distinction that has important consequences, as humanlike agents are more likely to be treated as "moral agents worthy of respect and concern," which influences people's expectations for and interpretations of their behavior.[47]

Agency is a common feature attributed to superhuman beings. A number of scholars have gone so far as to suggest that to be successful, concepts of deity must involve intentional agency, among several other requisite features.[48] Indeed, Boyer asserts that all spirits, gods, ancestors, and other religious conceptions are "invariably construed as intentional agents, to whom all intuitive assumptions about thought and perception apply."[49] However, Boyer also points out that "it is quite likely that concepts of gods and spirits are mostly organized by our intuitive notions of *agency in general* … rather than just human agency."[50] Indeed, some studies suggest that people are more likely to attribute agency to superhuman beings than humanlike psychology.[51] Moreover, agency may also be of a more superhuman than humanlike type when associated with deities: blessings and curses, for example, imply a superhuman, rather than strictly human, level of agency.

This book will assess the evidence for the treatment of various objects, qualities, and attributes as deities to determine the extent to which the ancient Near Eastern sources suggest that they are characterized as anthropopathic, as possessing humanlike mental capacities, and/or as agents. The texts that mention

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46 Epley, Waytz, and Cacioppo, 872.

47 Epley, Waytz, and Cacioppo, 864.

48 Justin L. Barrett, "Why Santa Claus Is Not a God," *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 8, nos. 1–2 (2008): 149, https://doi.org/10.1163/156770908X289251. Research in the cognitive science of religion further suggests that successful deity concepts must also be considered to be counterintuitive, to possess strategic information, to be able to act in the human world, and to be capable of motivating behaviors that reinforce belief in them.

49 Boyer, "What Makes Anthropomorphism Natural," 91. On superhuman beings as agents, see also Ilkka Pyysiäinen, *Supernatural Agents: Why We Believe in Souls, Gods, and Buddhas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

50 Pascal Boyer, *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 144 (emphasis original).

51 Shaman, Saide, and Richert, "Dimensional Structure of and Variation in Anthropomorphic Concepts of God," 13.

these deities rarely explicitly explain how they are conceptualized: they were generally not concerned with unpacking their natures.[52] On the other hand, they are often suggestive, allowing educated inferences. Thus, if it can be reasonably inferred from the evidence that these entities are attributed any of these characteristics, it would certainly make them counterintuitive, as neither objects nor qualities and attributes are normally considered to possess emotion, mind, or agency. Counterintuitiveness is a technical concept that describes something that contradicts information suggested by ontological categories, involving either a breach of or transfer of features across these categories, such as PERSON and OBJECT.[53] It is considered to be another key feature of successful deity concepts, especially when it is significant enough to be memorable, without being over-the-top. After analyzing the evidence, chapter 9 will return to the concept of counterintuitiveness as it pertains to the deities discussed in this book.

As the following chapter shows, previous studies of objects, qualities, and attributes as deities, especially in Mesopotamia, have relied on problematic terms and hard and fast dichotomies that are confusing and also elide the relative nature of some of these features, such as anthropomorphic versus nonanthropomorphic. As the discussion above has shown, this dichotomy does not have the best explanatory power when it comes to understanding the ancient evidence. Part of the issue with these concepts is their ambiguity, since anthropomorphism includes both physical and nonphysical features. In addition, the characteristics of anthropoid form, anthropopathism, humanlike mind, agency, and counterintuitiveness are best understood as continuums. Superhuman beings, including deities, can be attributed more or less anthroform shapes. For example, a goddess might be depicted in largely human form, but with the addition of animal features, such as wings. A given deity might also be described as possessing some of the same emotions and/or mental capacities as a human, but not others. For example, a deity might be construed as having some humanlike feelings, but not others, or with mental capacities that

52 As Stanley Stowers points out, such explicit theologizing is not necessary for the practice of religion: "People can have a basic intuitive sense of how to act toward the gods and similar beings that they imagine without any stories explaining who they are, where they came from, their character and nature, how they relate to other gods, and their histories .... Individuals do not necessarily or consistently integrate their practice with their theology and myth, and they can practice religion without them." Stowers, *History and the Study of Religion: The Ancient Mediterranean as a Test Case* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2024), 18.

53 Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 65–74.

far exceed those of humans, such as omniscience.[54] In addition, not all agents are attributed the same level of agency: some may be perceived as more active and/or humanlike than others.[55] Finally, concepts of deity can be more or less counterintuitive.[56] For example, deities that are minimally counterintuitive (in other words, that possess a limited number of counterintuitive features) have been demonstrated to be more prone to becoming the focus of religious attention than those that are more radically counterintuitive.[57]

By exploring objects, qualities, and attributes that are treated as deities, the next seven chapters encourage the recognition of a more expansive range of features that occur across this class in ancient sources, contributing to the list of attributes that characterize this polythetic category. Moreover, the types of traits that are emphasized as significant in different contexts illuminate the diversity of attributes associated with members of this category. Thus, each of the following chapters looks to a variety of ancient sources to see what types of objects, qualities, or attributes are categorized as deities in different textual and historical environments, with the understanding that membership in this category is neither fixed nor constant, and that not all members in the category will share the same attributes to the same degree or be viewed as equally central to the category. The conclusion to this volume will also exploit the prototype theory of categorization and cognitive science of religion to help illuminate the relationship between deified objects, qualities, and attributes and anthroform deities in ancient pantheons. By examining historical evidence from the distant past, this study also provides the opportunity to test the applicability of recent research in cognitive science and psychology of religion to ancient data, adding additional depth and diversity to the sources available for cognitive and psychological analysis.[58]

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54 On variation in the types and quantity of humanlike properties attributed to different superhuman beings, see Andrew Shtulman, "Variation in the Anthropomorphization of Supernatural Beings and Its Implications for Cognitive Theories of Religion," *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 34 no. 5 (2008): 1123–1138, https://doi.org/10.1037/0278-7393.34.5.1123.

55 On the limited agency of cult statues, see Barbara Nevling Porter, "Noseless in Nimrud: More Figurative Responses to Assyrian Domination," in *Of God(s), Trees, Kings, and Scholars: Neo-Assyrian and Related Studies in Honour of Simo Parpola*, ed. Mikko Luuko, Saana Svärd, and Raija Mattila, StOr 106 (Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society, 2009), 207–210.

56 See Justin L. Barrett, "Coding and Quantifying Counterintuitiveness in Religious Concepts: Theoretical and Methodological Reflections," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 20, no. 4 (2008): 308–338, https://doi.org/10.1163/157006808X371806.

57 Boyer, *Religion Explained*; Pyysiäinen, *How Religion Works*.

58 See Michael Muthukrishna, Joseph Henrich, and Edward Slingerland, "Psychology as a Historical Science," *Annual Review of Psychology* 72 (2021): 717–749, https://doi.org/10.1146/

3 Indicators of Divinity in Ancient Texts and Artistic Representations

This study takes as a basic premise that something is effectively deified when it is classified as or treated as a deity. This begs the question: How does one go about identifying cases where something is deified in ancient sources? Scholars have identified several indicators that a given entity is being classified or treated as a deity in texts and artistic representations and—while none of them should be considered definitive—they provide a solid starting place for further analysis of individual examples. For example, several Assyriologists have summarized the ways in which an entity can be marked as a deity in Mesopotamian texts and artistic representations.[59] These include: (1) labeling with the divine determinative; (2) identification with the generic nouns dingir (Sumerian) or *ilu* (Akkadian); (3) inclusion in deity lists; (4) receipt of rituals or other forms of religious devotion; (5) attribution of superhuman power or agency; and (6) depiction with the horned crown. Regarding West Semitic sources, Saul Olyan concludes that evidence of "cultic devotion" is the "only useful test of deity available to the scholar."[60] Mark Smith adds that other indicators include the use of generic nouns such as *ʾil* in Ugaritic or *ʾēl* in Biblical Hebrew.[61] Levantine

annurev-psych-082820-111436. As they point out, historical artifacts also provide an important source of data that is less WEIRD (Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic).

59 Porter suggests that Mesopotamian texts use three principal methods to identify deities: first, by calling an entity a deity or describing an entity as behaving in ways commonly attributed to deities; second, by labeling entities as deities by using an orthographic marker used to indicate the category to which an entity belongs (the divine determinative); and third, by recording the treatment of an entity in ways typically reserved for a deity ("Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum," 161). Similarly, Machinist cites the use of the divine determinative, the words dingir (Sumerian) or *ilu* (Akkadian), visual depiction with the horned crown or wings, and inclusion in god lists (such as AN = *Anum*) as providing strong, though not decisive, indication that a given entity is classified as a deity in Mesopotamian sources ("Anthropomorphism in Mesopotamian Religion," 71–73). Selz argues that entities are identified as deities in ancient Sumerian texts when they are recorded as undergoing rituals specific to deities (such as naming or induction to a cult-place) or receiving offerings; he also points toward inclusion in god lists, as well as the use of determinatives as indicating that an entity is classified as a deity ("Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp," 179).

60 Olyan, *Thousand Thousands Served Him*, 92–107.

61 Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 6–8. In his discussion of how to ascertain "what divinity is" in ANE sources, he discusses four main possibilities, noting benefits and drawbacks to each: (1) taking an "inventory of figures called 'divine' (Akkadian *ilu*, Ugaritic *ʾil*, BH *ʾēl*)" or marked with the divine determinative; (2) using an etymological approach

iconography often marks deities with horns as well, as do some descriptions of deity in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Num 24:8).

To summarize, deities appear to be demarcated in ancient Near Eastern sources in several possible ways. First, texts may label them using orthographic markers (when these exist in the script), apply generic nouns understood to represent a special class of superhuman entities to them, or enumerate the set to which they belong by including them in lists, indicating that divinity is being assigned. Second, texts may record, describe, or prescribe religious practices typically reserved for special types of superhuman entities. When cultic attention is paid to an entity, it can be inferred that it is with the expectation that the deity will be pleased thereby and respond benevolently. Texts can also bestow special functions or roles, such as that of superhuman protectors, guarantors of oaths, or enactors of curses or blessings, indicating specific types of agency. In artistic representations, a deity might be visually represented as such by wearing a horned crown or tall conical cap, visually demarcating its divinity. This list provides a set of strong starting points for identifying and analyzing examples of objects, qualities, and attributes labeled, classified, treated, or portrayed as deities. However, two critical caveats should be emphasized: first, this list is not exhaustive, and second, each of these potential indicators of divinity comes with its own critical issues. Their respective benefits and drawbacks are discussed further below.

3.1 *Divine Determinatives*

The use of the divine determinative in cuneiform (as well as in the hieroglyphic scripts used for Egyptian and Luwian) is one helpful indicator that a particular entity is classified as a deity within a given text.[62] As Francesca Rochberg explains, these unpronounced graphic markers "offer up a kind of nomenclature devised to indicate or 'determine' the taxonomic category to which a

to identify from whence these generic terms derive; (3) listing and studying individual deities; and/or (4) using a comparative approach to create a typology of divinity.

62 For a basic introduction to determinatives in Akkadian, see John Huehnergard, *A Grammar of Akkadian*, 3rd ed., HSS 45 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 111–112. For Sumerian, see Dietz Otto Edzard, *Sumerian Grammar*, HdO 71 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 9–10. On the divine determinative in Egyptian, see Racheli Shalomi-Hen, *Classifying the Divine: Determinatives and Categorisation in CT 335 and BD 17*, Classification and Categorization in Ancient Egypt 2, Göttinger Orientforschungen 38 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000); Shalomi-Hen, *The Writing of Gods: The Evolution of Divine Classifiers in the Old Kingdom*, Classification and Categorization in Ancient Egypt 4, Göttinger Orientforschungen 38 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006). Greater attention is paid here to the use of cuneiform determinatives, as they play a larger role in the following chapters.

written word, and the thing (or idea) it represents, belongs."[63] These categories are polythetic, and the classifications are culturally determined.[64] For example, in cuneiform the sign used to write this graphemic classifier probably originated as a pictograph of a star, and was regularly used from the end of the third millennium through the last texts written in Akkadian.[65] The same determinative was adopted along with the cuneiform script for Hittite and Cuneiform Luwian.

This label can help identify objects, qualities, and attributes that are classified as deities in a particular text (or portion thereof). However, there are also issues that arise when relying on determinatives. As Kim Benzel points out, "The insistence on the part of most scholars today that a substance or object cannot be sacred, holy, or divine unless specifically deified, or marked with a *dingir* sign, seems too restrictive for the Mesopotamian mindset, which seems to have been anything but single-minded."[66] Determinatives are not always consistently applied, both across texts and even within a single text.[67] In addition, their exact meaning is not transparent to the modern reader. As Porter explains, "because the precise meaning of each of the determinative labels and the nature of the category each refers to is never explicitly discussed in ancient Mesopotamian sources … it cannot be entirely excluded that the DINGIR determinative meant instead, 'sharing a quality typical of DINGIRs,' perhaps holiness or sacredness."[68] However, Porter hypothesizes that the use of the DINGIR determinative implies that the word is "understood to *be* a DINGIR, with all that that entailed," based on the way she sees other determinatives functioning:

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63 Rochberg, *Before Nature: Cuneiform Knowledge and the History of Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 93.

64 As Orly Goldwasser remarks concerning Egyptian, "the feature of the hieroglyphic script that Egyptologists call 'determinative' consists of and reflects a system of knowledge-organization … this organization is not at all arbitrary or context-bound, but faithfully represents the deep structured system of world-organization of Egyptian elite society." Goldwasser, *Prophets, Lovers and Giraffes: Wor(l)d Classification in Ancient Egypt*, GOF.Ä (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), 25.

65 Selz, "Divine Prototypes," 15. For its use in the last texts in Akkadian, see Pongratz-Leisten, "Divine Agency and Astralization of the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia," 144. The Egyptian determinative, on the other hand, takes several different forms. See Shalomi-Hen, *Writing of Gods*.

66 Benzel, "'What Goes in Is What Comes Out'—But What Was Already There? Divine Materials and Materiality in Ancient Mesopotamia," in Pongratz-Leisten and Sonik, *The Materiality of Divine Agency*, 112.

67 For some examples of occasional deification, see Hundley, "Divinized Instruments and Divine Music."

68 Porter, "Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum," 164.

> The sign for the word "bird," for example, is used as a determinative preceding the names of birds, not of objects with bird-like qualities, just as the determinative for "female" appears before words naming female persons and female animals, not entities belonging to the world of women or having what was judged to be feminine qualities. By analogy, we would expect the DINGIR determinative to identify entities that were considered to *be* DINGIRs, not just to be DINGIR-like.[69]

Further in-depth study of the use of the divine determinative across different cuneiform and hieroglyphic corpora is needed.[70] Until then, its use suggests that divinity is being attributed, though its meaning cannot be considered entirely self-evident.

3.2 *Generic Nouns*

The use of specific terminology, such as the generic nouns in various ancient Near Eastern languages usually translated into English as "deity" or "god," is another useful indicator. These common nouns, such as dingir in Sumerian, *ilu*(*m*) in Akkadian, *ʔil* in Ugaritic, or *ʾēl* in Biblical Hebrew, are often placed in apposition to a deity's name or epithet or used as part of an epithet. Parallelism, a common poetic device in ancient texts in which two synonymous or closely related terms or phrases are used in successive constructions, can also provide evidence of shared classification.[71] But while these might seem straightforward ways of indicating that an entity is a deity, caution must still be used. Epithets,

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69 Porter, 164 (emphasis original).

70 Thus far determinatives have been studied in the most detail in Sumerian and Egyptian. See Gebhard J. Selz and Bo Zhang, "Classification in Sumerian Cuneiform and the Implementation of *iClassifier*," *Journal of Chinese Writing Systems* (2024): 59–78, https://doi.org/10.1177/25138502231215875; Selz, "Who Is a God? A Note on the Evolution of the Divine Classifiers in a Multilingual Environment," in *Libiamo ne' lieti calici: Ancient Near Eastern Studies Presented to Lucio Milano on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday by Pupils, Colleagues and Friends*, ed. Paola Corò et al., AOAT 436 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2016), 605–614; and Selz, Collette Grinevald, and Orly Goldwasser, "The Question of Sumerian 'Determinatives': Inventory, Classifier Analysis, and Comparison to Egyptian Classifiers from the Linguistic Perspective of Noun Classification," in *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Egyptian-Coptic Linguistics: Crossroads V, Berlin, February 17–20, 2016*, ed. Daniel A. Werning, Lingua Aegyptia 25 (Hamburg: Widmaier, 2018), 281–344. On Egyptian determinatives, see Goldwasser, *Prophets, Lovers and Giraffes*; Shalomi-Hen, *Classifying the Divine*; and Shalomi-Hen, *Writing of Gods*.

71 See Saul M. Olyan's discussion of the use of poetic parallelism to indicate "implicit shared classification" in the Hebrew Bible. Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, ABRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 26–28.

for example, can provide important insight into the characterization of deities, but it is not always evident whether a given word is being used as an epithet or a proper noun.[72]

3.3 *Deity Lists*

Independent lists of deities are part of the long lexical tradition in Mesopotamia. Lexical texts were copied, edited, and recopied for nearly three millennia by scholars, sometimes undergoing substantial changes over time.[73] Many of these lists eventually spread throughout the regions in which cuneiform was used. Early Dynastic exemplars are arranged by sign, phonetic resemblance, and conceptual or semantic association, while second and first millennium lists of deities appear more standardized and are organized hierarchically, based around genealogical and spousal relationships. Deity lists tend to showcase more variation than most other types of lexical lists, though the major list known as AN: *Anum* becomes somewhat standard after the Old Babylonian period; in later versions, it includes almost two thousand entries.[74] Lists of deities could also be embedded in larger compositions, such as treaties.[75] Gonzalo Rubio suggests that the contents and organization of deity lists are based on their scribes' scholarly or "theological preoccupations," noting that they can provide a different pantheon than that of the official cult (as attested in offering lists and ritual texts) or popular religion (as attested in theophoric personal names).[76] Thus, they provide a contrast to the latter two, allowing for a greater understanding of the deities posited or prioritized by different groups. However, it is not clear from these lists whether the entities included would have been considered deities by groups outside the scribal circles who produced, copied, and circulated them. In addition, the tendency apparent in the lexical tradition to expand such lists may result in entries that are more the product of scholarly imagination than religious praxis.

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72 See Aicha Rahmouni, *Divine Epithets in the Ugaritic Alphabetic Texts*, HdO 93 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), xvii, xxiii–xxvi.

73 For a detailed study of the lexical tradition, see Niek Veldhuis, *History of the Cuneiform Lexical Tradition*, GMTR 6 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2014).

74 Rubio, "Gods and Scholars," 97–99. See Richard L. Litke, *A Reconstruction of the Assyro-Babylonian God-Lists AN:* ^{d}Anu-um *and AN:* Anu ša amēli, Texts from the Babylonian Collection 3 (New Haven: Yale Babylonian Collection, 1998); and W.G. Lambert and Ryan D. Winters, *An = Anum and Related Lists*, God Lists of Ancient Mesopotamia 1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023).

75 On embedded god-lists, see Allen, *Splintered Divine*, 95–140.

76 Rubio, "Gods and Scholars," 92, 109.

3.4 *Cultic Attention*

As in many other societies, humans in the ancient Near East attempted to communicate with and influence deities through religious practices. Deities were expected to respond to this attention, typically in favorable, humanlike or superhuman-like ways. As Stanley Stowers explains, "communicating with (e.g., prayer), communications from (e.g., divinatory practices), and the exchange of gifts with typically unseen beings … arise from having biases promoting beliefs about generally invisible human-like agents and fairness."[77] Texts that describe certain types of cultic devotion show that the recipients were, or at least that someone thought they should be, treated as deities by people on that occasion. For example, they could be the objects of special types of ritual or the recipients of offerings. Certain rituals specifically served to animate their objects, such as mouth-opening, mouth-washing, or ceremonial naming. Prayers, on the other hand, indicate a perception of their recipients' benevolence and responsiveness. As Lenzi, Frechette, and Zernecke point out, "it becomes clear in the course of the prayer that the deity is construed as benevolent because a) he is assumed to be interested in hearing the prayer and b) he is assumed to be capable of acting upon it for the benefit of the supplicant."[78]

Offering records and lists usually describe what offerings did (or should) take place at a given time and place. Texts concerning offerings are very common, no doubt because the recording of offerings played a crucial economic and administrative role in many environments. However, whether an individual text is descriptive, prescriptive, or relevant only insofar as it reflects the practices associated with its own composition must be determined on a case-by-case basis (and is sometimes unclear).[79] In offering lists, names of deities are paired with their appropriate offerings. Such texts could be independent or included within larger compositions. Lists of deities and their respective offerings from sites such as Ebla and Ugarit may also indicate shared membership in this category and can indicate their relative rank and importance compared to other deities. Offering records, on the other hand, record offerings given by particular individuals, usually on a specific date, like a sort of receipt or tag.

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77 Stowers, *History and the Study of Religion*, 17.

78 Lenzi, Frechette, and Zernecke, "Introduction," 14.

79 In addition, writers may also intentionally misrepresent past practice for various ideological purposes. For example, the priestly elite may wish to legitimate innovative cultic practices or texts by claiming their antiquity. See the examples in Chiara Meccariello and Jennifer Singletary, "Introduction," in *Uses and Misuse of Ancient Mediterranean Sources: Erudition, Authority, Manipulation*, ed. Chiara Meccariello and Jennifer Singletary, SERAPHIM 12 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 1–11.

These shorter records may describe one or more gifts that were proffered to a deity or deities, but usually do not include a lengthy list.

When an entity appears as the recipient of offerings in an offering list or record, someone is claiming that offerings should be or were actually directed toward it. Thus, that entity can be reasonably considered to be treated as a deity in that context. Moreover, records of offerings indicate something about the characterization of deities. They imply that the recipients are capable of appreciating and responding to gifts: "A deity receiving many costly offerings is not only powerful, but apparently also lends a willing ear to people's needs."[80] In other words, evidence of offerings implies that their recipients were considered to be agents capable of responding appropriately to gifts, frequently the same sorts of gifts that a human would appreciate, following the "logic of social exchange."[81] Thus, the giving of offerings implies that their recipients are conceptualized as agents with humanlike tastes that are capable of responding benevolently.

3.5 *Divine Roles*

Deities in the ancient Near East were often expected, wished, or imagined to play certain roles as active agents in humans' lives. Deities are thus depicted functioning in specific roles with respect to humans. Oaths, for example, cast deities as the guarantors of human promises. Oaths in the ancient Near East were serious, legally binding affairs: deities were called upon to witness them and punish the party who breached one or destroyed a record of it. Similarly, prayers often communicate the hope that deities will intervene benevolently in human affairs. Blessings and curses also invoke deities as agents with particular types of power *vis à vis* humans, whether to help or to harm.

Many anthroponyms depict deities in certain roles as well. Names in ancient Near Eastern languages are often theophoric, composed of short sentences or phrases that describe hoped for or completed actions of deities or ascribe particular qualities to them. Personal names that consist of a theophoric element (a deity's name or epithet) plus a verbal form or a noun or adjective in rela-

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80 Anne Katrine de Hemmer Gudme, "Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Dedicatory Inscriptions as Communication with the Divine," in *Mediating between Heaven and Earth: Communication with the Divine in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Carly L. Crouch, Jonathan Stökl, and Anna Elise Zernecke, LHBOTS 566 (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 12, citing Ton Derks, *Gods, Temples and Ritual Practices: The Transformation of Religious Ideas and Values in Roman Gaul*, Amsterdam Archaeological Studies 2 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998), 234.

81 Brett E. Maiden, *Cognitive Science and Ancient Israelite Religion: New Perspectives on Texts, Artefacts, and Culture*, SOTSMS (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 29.

tion to the theophoric element describe the potential, desired, or perceived actions or qualities of that deity. Such personal names are often "linguistically transparent" to speakers of the language; in other words, "their meaning is evident, since they are formed from ordinary words of the language."[82] Many of these names contain a deity's proper name, which typically occurs in particular positions within the grammatical structure of names (referred to as theophoric position). For this reason, and because personal names often contain entities in theophoric position that are not otherwise attested as deities, or about which little is known, onomastic evidence is frequently used by scholars attempting to reconstruct the range of deities attested at various sites in the ancient Near East.[83] Anthroponyms of this type may also give valuable insight into the religious beliefs and practices of the nonelite, which are often more challenging to ascertain, since the majority of textual productions stem from the elite cultural producers within these societies.

3.6 *Horned Crowns and Other Visual Markers*

Finally, artistic representations of deities often delineate them using visual markers, such as horned crowns or particular types of cap.[84] Though such attire is usually only depicted adorning deities, it is also skewed toward anthroform representations of divinity: one normally needs a head to wear a crown or a cap. This criterion is thus somewhat less useful when it comes to deities without anthropoid forms and will play less of a role in the present study, which focuses more on textual representations. However, art historical approaches to this topic will certainly illuminate it in new ways in the future.

4 Objects, Qualities, and Attributes

This book focuses on several types of previously understudied deities attested in the textual evidence from the ancient Near East: specifically, manufactured

82 Michael O'Connor, "The Onomastic Evidence for Bronze-Age West Semitic," *JAOS* 124, no. 3 (2004): 446, https://doi.org/10.2307/4132275. However, as O'Connor notes, not all names would have been equally transparent, even to speakers of the same language. A few names in every onomastic corpus would probably even have been incomprehensible, or linguistically "opaque."

83 For example, almost half of Pomponio and Xella's catalog of the deities of Ebla consists of deities occurring exclusively in anthroponyms and toponyms (Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 349–526).

84 On horned crowns in Mesopotamian art, see the bibliography in Hundley, *Yahweh among the Gods*, 17n35.

objects, abstract qualities, and attributes. This section clarifies what is included in these typological categories, which are second-order scholarly constructions that should not be understood as implying that these types of deities were perceived as constituting either separate or unified classes of deities by ancient thinkers.[85]

First, this study focuses on manufactured objects, or items that are not naturally occurring features of the earth or sky, but rather products designed and constructed through human (or humanlike) labor. The term manufactured, encompassing various types of constructed artifacts, is used primarily to distinguish these things from natural or geographical features, including, for example, astronomical bodies, mountains, or rivers. The use of such a categorical distinction for the purpose of delineating the focus of this study does not imply that this was a clear category distinction made by the ancient writers. The deification of natural features is amply attested in ancient Near Eastern sources as well, but that topic is left to other studies, which may benefit from employing some of the methods and interpretive strategies used here. This book also does not deal extensively with anthroform cult statues or other representations of the divine in humanoid form, which, though certainly manufactured objects, have already been treated extensively in many other studies.[86]

The chapters that follow consider movables such as weapons, crowns, cultic paraphernalia, and musical instruments, as well as less portable objects such as architectural constructions, including cities, temples, or city walls, to be manufactured objects. Though a city is quite a different type of object from a crown,

85 As Daniel Schwemer comments, "the identification of a series of deities as representatives of one particular type does not imply *a priori* that relationships can be reconstructed by historians of religion or that theological connections were made by the ancient scholars themselves." Schwemer, "The Storm-gods of the Ancient Near East: Summary, Synthesis, Recent Studies Part 1," *JANER* 7, no. 2 (2008): 123, https://doi.org/10.1163/156921207783876404. See also Schwemer, *Die Wettergottgestalten Mesopotamiens und Nordsyriens im Zeitalter der Keilschriftkulturen: Materialien und Studien nach den schriftlichen Quellen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001), 5–9.

86 See Angelika Berlejung, *Die Theologie der Bilder: Herstellung und Einweihung von Kultbildern in Mesopotamien und die alttestamentliche Bilderpolemik*, OBO 162 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998); Michael B. Dick, ed., *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999); Christopher Walker and Michael Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian* Mīs Pî *Ritual*, SAALT 1 (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Corpus Project, 2001); Zainab Bahrani, *The Graven Image: Representation in Babylonia and Assyria*, Archaeology, Culture, and Society (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); Hundley, *Gods in Dwellings*, 139–372.

both share in common that they are constructed by humans, rather than being natural features of the landscape (such as mountains or rivers) or natural productions of the environment (such as agricultural produce or minerals, such as salt). However, it is important to note that in many cases it is unclear whether a reference to an object in a text refers to a specific material exemplar, or whether it refers to the mental concept of that object, or to an immaterial object that exists in the realm of the superhuman, or even a mixture of these.

Second, this study also examines qualities, delimited as abstract features or properties commonly attributed to deities, rulers, or others in the ancient Near East, but that are not uniquely or outstandingly associated with a particular deity. For instance, princeliness and holiness are considered qualities, as they could be possessed by many deities or even human beings. This category is similar to divine attributes, as attributes are also possessed by divine beings; however, this book uses attributes to indicate possessions of a particular deity that are closely associated with that deity alone, such as a specific proper name or epithet. This book focuses largely on divine or royal qualities and attributes that are themselves treated as deities based on the nature of the evidence available: most of the qualities and attributes treated as deities in the texts are closely associated with royalty or divinity.

These categories should not be understood as having impermeable boundaries. Some objects, qualities, or attributes blur the borders between them. For example, a weapon that is emblematic of a goddess, such as Ištar's spear, might be considered both as an object and as an attribute. Or, to cite another example, though the proper name of a deity is an attribute, name as a concept in general is possessed by many divine beings, and so is considered a quality in this study when it does not belong to a particular individual god or goddess.

The choice to focus specifically on manufactured objects, as well as abstract qualities and attributes, is deliberate. Though they span different conceptual categories, all three of these types of deities have proven to be especially problematic to interpret, making them ideal for a study that seeks to expand the understanding of ancient conceptions of deity beyond previous reconstructions. Scholarly understandings of these types of entities have also been hampered by a shared set of problematic and outdated theories.

The concept of hypostatization has had an especially negative impact on studies of these types of deities. Scholars that argue that objects, qualities, or attributes that appear to be treated as deities are hypostases of other, more prominently attested deities often interpret the former as lesser divine or semidivine beings that serve as mediators between humans and more important, transcendent divine beings. Reliance upon this concept is still common

in scholarship,[87] despite forceful critiques that demonstrate not only its lack of utility, but also its problematic theological underpinnings.[88] Though in some cases there is evidence for divine beings serving as intercessors, the concept of hypostatization is inextricably intertwined with theological ideas concerning the need for intermediation between transcendent (male) deities and humans via (female) beings of an intermediate class, which developed much later. The application of this concept to data from the ancient Near East has been justly criticized as "anachronistic" and "theologically loaded," and should be abandoned.[89]

The aniconism promulgated by certain biblical texts, which portray objects as "dead" and mock those who pay them cultic attention, has also impacted previous discussion. Several scholars working on Mesopotamian religion have highlighted the effect of aniconic polemics on contemporary scholarship on divine objects. For example, Beate Pongratz-Leisten opens her essay on divine agency in Mesopotamia by quoting a Deuteronomistic polemic against the worship of objects. Her essay "tackles the question whether the Deuteronomist's reproach on venerating the heavenly bodies instead of God does justice to the complex notion of the divine as shaped by the theologians of the ancient Near East in general and of Mesopotamia in particular."[90] Gebhard Selz also begins his essay on deified cultic objects in Sumerian texts by citing an aniconic polemic from the book of Jeremiah as a contrast to the evidence he discusses.[91]

Famous biblical poems, such as Ps 115, contrast the power of the God of Israel with the ineffectual work of human hands. These mocking descriptions of iconic cultic practices coupled with the "extreme dualism" that privileges

87 For example, see the interpretations of the Name of ʾEl, Baʿal, and/or A/asherah as "hypostases" of YHWH in the inscriptions from Kuntillet ʿAjrud in P. Kyle McCarter, "Aspects of the Religion of the Israelite Monarchy: Biblical and Epigraphic Data," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller, Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 137–155; Shmuel Aḥituv, Esther Eshel, and Ze'ev Meshel, "The Inscriptions," in *Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Ḥorvat Teman): An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah-Sinai Border*, ed. Ze'ev Meshel (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2012), 133; and Jeremy Smoak and William Schniedewind, "Religion at Kuntillet Ajrud," *Religions* 10, no. 3 (2019): 1–18, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10030211.

88 See Olyan, *Thousand Thousands Served Him*, 89–91.

89 See the critique in Aren M. Wilson-Wright, *Athtart: The Transmission and Transformation of a Goddess in the Late Bronze Age*, FAT 90 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 134–135.

90 Pongratz-Leisten, "Divine Agency and Astralization of the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia," 137.

91 Selz, "Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp," 167.

spirit over matter that originated in early modern European thought have negatively influenced views on the deification of objects, qualities, and attributes.[92] As Nathaniel Levtow and others have shown, this dualist ontology that privileges the immaterial over the material is an anachronistic lens through which to view ancient Near Eastern cultic practices.[93] Rather, abundant evidence makes clear that in the ancient Near East, deities were considered to be present in physical forms (such as cult statues) at physical locations (such as temples).[94] As Benjamin Sommer points out, the *mīs pî* and *pīt pî* rituals in Mesopotamia transform cult statues into gods that could hear prayers and smell offerings: "A *ṣalmu* … did not merely direct the worshipper's mind toward a god who dwelled in some other sphere; it did not *depict* the god. Rather … the divine presence entered into the statue and the *ṣalmu was* the god."[95] The word for these statues, *ṣalmu*, was also sometimes written with the divine determinative.[96] Clearly, it is culturally plausible for certain objects to be treated as deities in the ancient Near East. This book demonstrates that this phenomenon was not limited to cultic statuary: a variety of objects, as well as more abstract qualities and attributes, could also be treated as deities. The chapters that follow take the evidence for this in ancient Near Eastern texts seriously.[97]

5 The Evidence

The next seven chapters view texts that label an object, quality, or attribute as a deity or include it in a list of deities, texts that describe it being treated as a deity

92 Nathaniel B. Levtow, *Images of Others: Iconic Politics in Ancient Israel*, BJSUCSD 11 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 6–7.

93 See also Pongratz-Leisten, "Divine Agency and Astralization of the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia," 139.

94 See the essays in Dick, *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth*; and Neal H. Walls, ed., *Cult Images and Divine Representation in the Ancient Near East*, ASOR Books 10 (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2005). See also Hundley, *Gods in Dwellings*.

95 Sommer, *Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel*, 19–21 (emphasis original).

96 Walker and Dick, *Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia*.

97 Similarly, Sommer offers a corrective to what he refers to as the scholarly avoidance of the evidence for the corporeality of the biblical God, which he argues has resulted in attempts to ignore, deny, explain away, or otherwise minimize the evidence, or to assert that it is only intended symbolically or metaphorically. Instead, he suggests that scholars take the statements about the physicality of God's body in the Bible seriously (*Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel*, 4–10).

in cultic practice, and texts that describe it functioning as a deity with respect to humans as treating that entity as a deity in that context. Noticeably excluded from this study are literary texts, which often use figurative language or literary devices, such as personification or metaphor, to describe objects, qualities, or attributes, but that do not necessarily indicate that these entities were conceptualized as deities.[98] As discussed above, scholars can recognize which entities were considered to be part of this category by examining texts that classify an entity as a deity, describe an entity being treated by people in ways appropriate to a deity, and/or describe an entity functioning in a supernatural role typically appropriate only for a deity. Fortunately, the ever-growing pool of sources available for the study of deities in the ancient Near East is both extensive and varied. Texts have been found that contain names, descriptions, and cultic practices directed toward thousands of deities, ranging from lists of deities' names to ritual texts to onomastica.

This book primarily focuses on the textual evidence, though archaeology and art-historical data will occasionally be referenced and will no doubt have much to contribute to this discussion in the future. Because not every type of text occurs at every site, or contains relevant evidence, not all genres of texts will be discussed in each chapter. For example, only certain writing systems used determinatives. Deity lists occur much more frequently in Mesopotamia than elsewhere; the majority of the known independent deity lists come from there or were originally composed there. Offering lists and records occur in texts from the archives of several major sites in Syria in the second millennium, but much more rarely in the first, while at Elephantine, deities appear in oaths, an offering record, and the onomasticon.

Finally, it should be noted that the primary geographic focus of this study is the central section of the ancient Near East, which covers much of what is now called the Middle East. This region in western Asia was home to a number of different ancient cultures, from the Sumerians of Mesopotamia to the Hittites in Anatolia, and is also geographically contiguous with Egypt in northeast Africa. Though textual and archaeological evidence that depicts objects, qualities, and attributes as deities appear in all of these areas, this study focuses primarily on ancient Mesopotamia, the Levant, North Arabia, and Elephantine. Additional corpora, such as the Hittite and Egyptian sources, must wait to be addressed in future publications, as a complete study of this phenomenon across all of

98 Similarly, Olyan discusses a number of examples of the "special figurative treatment" of attributes and body parts of YHWH in the Hebrew Bible but distinguishes these from cases in which something receives "cultic devotion," indicating that it was considered to be a deity (*Thousand Thousands Served Him*, 88–98).

ancient West Asia and Egypt would involve more data than can be adequately dealt with in a single book.[99]

6 Chapter Outline

The following chapters analyze how objects, qualities, and attributes are classified, treated, and portrayed functioning as deities in texts from sites across the ancient Near East. Chapter 2 surveys a selection of the evidence and reviews previous scholarship concerning objects, qualities, and attributes as deities in ancient Mesopotamia. This chapter argues that some of the key paradigms used in prior studies are problematic, especially the dichotomy between "anthropomorphic" and "nonanthropomorphic." Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 examine the evidence from four sites in Syria, dating from the third and second millennia BCE: Ebla, Alalakh, Emar, and Ugarit. The seventh chapter examines epigraphic sources from the first millennium from a variety of sites in the ancient Near East, including Kuntillet ʿAjrud and Taymāʾ, while the eighth chapter focuses on the archives from Persian period Elephantine, Papyrus Amherst 63, and passages from the biblical book of Jeremiah. Finally, chapter 9 compares the ways in which objects, qualities, and attributes are portrayed as deities across these sites and suggests some new interpretive possibilities to explain why such entities might have been included in these ancient pantheons, their relative lack of prominence, and how these entities were imagined in relation to gods and goddesses described in more clearly humanlike forms. Engaging with recent research in cognitive science of religion, this chapter shows that instead of demonstrating fundamental differences between the minds and cognition of ancient people and modern scholars, both concepts of deity that include objects, qualities, and attributes and concepts of deity that focus on beings with more humanlike shapes are produced by the same cognitive processes and mental templates. However, these types of deities are also less cognitively optimal than more overtly humanlike gods and goddesses, which helps to explain their relative lack of prominence in most ancient Near Eastern pantheons.

99 For a brief discussion of a few Hittite examples, see Hundley, *Yahweh among the Gods*, 63, 66, 88, 79.

CHAPTER 2

Reconsidering the Evidence from Mesopotamia

The deities of ancient Mesopotamia are often described as primarily humanlike with respect to their imagined forms.[1] This is certainly the way the majority of gods and goddesses are portrayed in the Sumerian and Akkadian sources, especially in literary and mythological texts. Yet, it has long been noted that entities that are not so humanlike are also treated in similar ways in the textual record.[2] Though less common, this is by no means a rare occurrence: in addition to theriomorphic beings, natural features of the landscape, and astronomical bodies, various manufactured objects and occasionally abstract qualities and attributes are classified, labeled, treated, and described fulfilling the functions of deities in a substantial number of texts from sites in both northern and southern Mesopotamia from the third millennium through the Late Babylonian period.

The wealth of texts from Mesopotamia that treat objects, qualities, and attributes as deities has led a number of Assyriologists to take an interest in this phenomenon. This chapter reexamines a selection of the evidence collected in these previous studies, highlighting some of the critical issues that arise when scholars attempt to describe and understand these types of deities. Thus, while bringing together a representative sample of the evidence concerning this phenomenon from different periods in ancient Mesopotamia and providing a concise overview that can serve as a basis for cross-cultural comparison with the rest of the data discussed in this volume, this chapter also problematizes some common trends in previous studies, especially the frequent use of the dichotomy of anthropomorphic versus nonanthropomorphic. As discussed in the previous chapter, these terms engender confusion due to their wide range of meaning, which encompasses both form and emotional and mental capacities. In addition, the evidence does not support hard-and-fast divisions between these seemingly contrasting qualities. Rather, they are

1 Porter, "Introduction," 1.

2 Already in the first half of the last century, Thorkild Jacobsen observed that "objects and phenomena in man's environment become personified in varying degrees. They are somehow alive; they have wills of their own, each is a definite personality." Jacobsen, "Mesopotamia: The Cosmos as a State," in *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Henri A. Frankfort (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 130.

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better understood as continua: a given entity might possess some of the characteristics of each in varying degrees. For example, a deity might be described as anthropopathic in its desires or as having humanlike mental capacities, even if it lacks anthropoid form. Moreover, previous studies have insufficiently recognized the agency and animacy attributed to these types of deities. A fresh look at the evidence demonstrates that texts from ancient Mesopotamia that treat objects, qualities, or attributes as deities imply that they possess humanlike mental capacities and desires, as well as agency, all of which entail at least a certain level of animacy.

1 Sources from Mesopotamia

Roughly speaking, ancient Mesopotamia encompassed the area between and around the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers (modern Iraq). Three millennia transpired between the invention of writing in this region and the latest texts that were recorded in cuneiform, the logo-syllabic script created to write Sumerian and later adapted for use with the Akkadian language in its various Assyrian and Babylonian dialects.[3] The history of writing in Mesopotamia has been colorfully described as "one single but rich tapestry, whose many threads extended throughout a period of over three thousand years."[4] This is in part due to the rich stream of tradition within which select written texts were passed down and copied as part of scribal training curricula, giving them a remarkably long and enduring life. Yet, despite sharing many similarities, the textual traditions of different regions and cities within Mesopotamia each have their own complex histories as well, and the religious beliefs and practices attested for discrete time periods and locales are similarly diverse.

Many challenges make it difficult to provide a complete picture of the deities that were the focus of religion in Mesopotamia. Different areas and even cities had different sets of deities, which could change over time, and various types of sources represent the distinctive views, interests, and priorities of diverse groups. The deities enumerated in scholarly lists, for example, often differ from those found in documents pertaining to the official cult, which in turn only partially overlap with the deities who were popular in the theophoric names

3 On the dialects of Akkadian, see Juan-Pablo Vita, ed., *History of the Akkadian Language*, 2 vols., HdO 152 (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

4 Gonzalo Rubio, "Sumerian Literature," in *From an Antique Land: An Introduction to Ancient Near Eastern Literature*, ed. Carl S. Ehrlich (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 18.

people bestowed upon their children.[5] The religious beliefs and practices sponsored by the state were also not necessarily the same ones that were given pride of place by its citizens on a daily basis, though they probably shared much in common.

These factors, coupled with the political twists and turns throughout the long history of Mesopotamia and the impact of both earlier traditions and interactions with neighboring cultures, have led scholars to describe religion in Mesopotamia as evincing a complex mixture of both continuity and change,[6] with differing local, regional, and supraregional features, full of inconsistencies and contradictions,[7] alongside attempts at systemization and cohesiveness.[8] Assyrian and Babylonian religions are frequently discussed together in scholarly overviews because they share so much in common, including many of the deities' names and key features, as well as the hymns, prayers, and rituals directed toward them.[9] However, there were important differences as well; for example, though a number of deities were venerated in both Assyria and Babylonia, there is very little evidence that the preeminent Assyrian god, Aššur, received significant cultic devotion in Babylonia.[10]

In both the north and the south, objects, qualities, and attributes appear in lists of deities, offering lists and records, ritual texts, and personal names, among other sources. Scholars have been attempting to account for this aspect of religion in Mesopotamia for over a century. The following sections examine some of these efforts and the evidence collected. Early studies tended to focus on identifying a progression within Mesopotamian religion over time, while more recent studies have focused on compiling the evidence from various time periods and/or locations.

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5 Rubio, "Gods and Scholars," 107.

6 See Beate Pongratz-Leisten, "Mesopotamia," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Mediterranean Religions*, ed. Barbette Stanley Spaeth, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 33, 38.

7 Niek Veldhuis, *Religion, Literature, and Scholarship: The Sumerian Composition Nanše and the Birds, with a Catalogue of Sumerian Bird Names*, CM 22 (Leiden: Brill/Styx, 2004), 14–16.

8 See Pongratz-Leisten, "Mesopotamia," 33.

9 Stefan M. Maul, "Assyrian Religion," in *A Companion to Assyria*, ed. Eckart Frahm, BCAW (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, 2017), 336, https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118325216.ch18.

10 Grant Frame, "The God Aššur in Babylonia," in *Assyria 1995: Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Helsinki September 11–15, 1995*, ed. Simo Parpola and Robert M. Whiting (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997), 55–64. On Assyrian religion, see also Jennifer Singletary, "Assyrian Religion and Its Gods," in *The Religions around the Old Testament*, ed. Brent A. Strawn, Richard Purcell, and Jeffrey G. Audirsch (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming).

2 Diachronic Studies

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Assyriologists had noticed the presence of deified objects in numerous Sumerian and Akkadian texts and had begun debating the role of these objects within the development of religion in Mesopotamia. For example, Tharsicius Paffrath and Benno Landsberger attempted to ascertain whether this phenomenon is a relatively late development in Sumerian religion or belongs to its earliest stages.[11] In the later twentieth century, Thorkild Jacobsen and Wilfred Lambert continued the trend of examining this phenomenon diachronically. Jacobsen identified a progression in Mesopotamian religion from early "nonhuman" to later "human" conceptions of deity. He asserted that though there is evidence of deities with nonhuman forms in the earliest periods, the "victory of the human over the nonhuman forms" is evident from the Early Dynastic period, in which "the human form came to dominate almost completely, leaving to the older forms the somewhat ambiguous role of divine 'emblems' only."[12] In other words, he argues that the treatment of objects as deities is a relic of an early stage in Mesopotamian religion, a stage that eventually gave way to the concept of humanlike gods.[13]

Lambert takes a different stance on this phenomenon. Citing the lack of clear evidence for an early stage of Sumerian religion that focuses on nonanthroform deities, he suggests instead that the treatment of objects as deities is a secondary development.[14] He argues that though the pantheon was dominated by humanlike gods from the beginning of the historical period, the divinity of

11 Paffrath, *Zur Götterlehre in den altbabylonischen Königsinschriften: Mit einem ausführlichen Register der auf die altbabylonische Götterlehre be züglichen Stellen*, Studien zur Kultur und Geschichte des Altertums 6 (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1913), 61–67; Landsberger, "Die geistigen Leistungen der Sumerer," *Ankara Üniversitesi, Dil ve Tariḫ-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 3 (1945): 150–158. See also Selz's summary of early scholarship ("Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp," 168–169 and nn12, 13, 15). He notes the resistance of some early scholars to accepting entities such as manufactured objects as part of the pantheons of Mesopotamia.

12 Jacobsen, *Treasures of Darkness*, 6.

13 This theory was also supported by Karl Oberhuber, "Vom Präanthropomorphismus zum anthropomorphen Pantheon," in *Linguistisch-philologische Prolegomena zur altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte*, Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft, Vortrage und kleinere Schriften 53 (Innsbruck: Institut für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Innsbruck, 1991); and Petr Charvát, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Humankind's Long Journey into Civilization*, Dissertationes orientales 47 (Prague: Oriental Institute, 1993).

14 Lambert, "Ancient Mesopotamian Gods," 123–125. Indeed, Selz and many others now concur that the evidence does not support an "alleged 'preanthropomorphic' stage of Sumerian religion" ("Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp," 168nn8, 17).

the gods eventually began to spread to things such as gods' temples, cities of residence, or even paraphernalia.[15] This spread of divinity could be compared to the effect of a contagion: "The aura of a god in his temple could so attach itself to the temple, or architectural parts of it in particular, also to implements he used, and to the city which housed the temple, in such a way that these various things also became gods and received offerings as a mark of this fact."[16] However, Lambert asserts that these entities were considered to be of inferior status, existing on the fringes of pantheons dominated by more humanlike gods.[17]

These earlier studies share a preoccupation with the role of objects as deities within the diachronic development of religion over the course of Mesopotamian history. However, whether the objects preceded the anthroform gods or vice versa is extremely difficult to ascertain, as both are attested already in the third millennium and continue to be attested throughout Mesopotamian history, as the evidence discussed below demonstrates. Leaving the question of origins aside, more recently scholars have focused on examining the evidence synchronically, focusing on different sites and time periods. These studies and the evidence they collect are discussed in the following section.

3 Objects, Qualities, and Attributes as Deities from the Third Millennium to the Late Babylonian Period

In the late 1990s and early twenty-first century, several Assyriologists explored the evidence for the treatment of objects, and occasionally also qualities and attributes, as deities within distinct historical and geographical contexts.[18]

15 Lambert, "Ancient Mesopotamian Gods," 128. Lambert mainly focuses on the evidence for this phenomenon from southern Mesopotamia.

16 Lambert, "Ancient Mesopotamian Gods," 129. See also his comments in Lambert, "God Aššur," 83–84.

17 Lambert, "Ancient Mesopotamian Gods," 129–130.

18 These more recent studies also account for changes over time: Selz discusses the decrease in the evidence for deified professions during the course of the third millennium, while Porter discusses the characterization of gods' beds as deities in different periods and locations and changes in the labeling and treatment of musical instruments as gods after the Ur III period (Selz, "Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp," 174; Porter, "Feeding Dinner to a Bed," 324–327; Porter, "Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum," 178–180). However, these recent studies focus more on describing religious practices in particular periods at select sites in Mesopotamia than on positing a long-term progression or evolution of Mesopotamian religion.

Gebhard Selz, Paul-Alain Beaulieu, and Barbara Porter have made the most significant contributions to the discussion. Each identifies a substantial number of cases in which such deities are described in similar ways to other, more commonly studied, anthroform gods and goddesses from ancient Mesopotamia. These and other studies demonstrate conclusively that this phenomenon is confined to neither early nor later periods, but occurs in both northern and southern Mesopotamia from the third millennium through the Late Babylonian period. As Porter summarizes, "In every chronological period and in every geographic region, Mesopotamian texts of various types refer to material objects, buildings, natural phenomena … in ways that suggest that these and many other non-anthropomorphic entities were thought of, at least at times, as being gods."[19]

3.1 *Evidence from the Third Millennium*

The earliest examples of the deification of cultic objects date to the third millennium.[20] Analyzing such objects, as well as a few qualities, attributes, and professions and cultural achievements, which appear in the Metal List, the Fara deity lists, records of offerings from Old Sumerian Lagaš, and Neo-Sumerian ritual texts that describe the name-giving, mouth-washing, and mouth-opening of objects, Selz argues that cultic objects "could be understood as representations of 'divine powers' and therefore could be treated as independent entities." He demonstrates that "these functions stand for specific religious ideas and, as their representations, these entities could become objects of an independent cult."[21]

Both archeological and textual evidence point toward the treatment of certain objects, qualities, and attributes as deities in the third millennium. Though the significance of this practice is not entirely clear, cultic objects, including vessels, parts of seating-chests, and weapons made of precious materials, appear in the context of ritual burials in the Eanna temple in the Uruk IV period, and musical instruments, such as harps or lyres, and parts of weapons were found in the royal tombs at Ur.[22] However, the Early Dynastic lists of deities from Fara and Abu-Salabikh, as well as the so-called Metal List known from various copies, provide the first secure textual evidence from Mesopota-

19 Porter, "Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum," 160.

20 Selz defines *cultic object* as an ambiguous term that "can designate an object that is *worshipped*, but … can also refer to any object or item *playing a role* in a given religious ceremony" ("Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp," 168, emphasis original).

21 Selz, 167.

22 Selz, 169–170.

mia for what Selz refers to as "the deification of inanimate objects."[23] The Metal List enumerates items made of metal, such as daggers, and their deified counterparts written with the divine determinative, which may form part of a temple inventory.[24] "Deified paraphernalia" also appear in the Fara god lists with the divine determinative.[25] As categorized by Selz, these include divine/deified emblems and paraphernalia, deified professions/offices, cultural achievements or properties, and other items, including abstract qualities and a musical instrument.[26]

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23 Selz, 171. See also Manfred Krebernik, "Die Götterlisten aus Fāra," *ZA* 76 (1986): 161–203; Pietro Mander, *Il Pantheon di Abu-Ṣālabīkh: Contributo allo studio del pantheon sumerico arcaico*, Instituto Universitario Orientale, Departimento di Studi Asiatici, Series Minor 26 (Napoli: Instituto Universitario Orientale, 1986); Charvát, *Ancient Mesopotamia*; Robert K. Englund and Hans J. Nissen, *Die lexikalischen Listen der archaischen Texte aus Uruk*, Ausgrabungen der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft in Uruk-Warka 13 (Berlin: Mann, 1993). The evidence from deity lists is difficult to interpret, as discussed in ch. 1. See Allen, *Splintered Divine*, 141–145. As Allen argues, it is unclear to what extent such lists would have represented actual cultic practice or have been considered theologically authoritative. Allen also suggests that some of the more unusual names in the lists may have been added to give the list an air of completeness, rather than reflecting the pantheon as it was actually conceptualized in Fara.

24 See Selz, "Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp," 170–171 and n45. For a different view on this list, see Englund and Nissen, *Die lexikalischen Listen der archaischen Texte aus Uruk*, 34; and Wolfgang Heimpel, "Balang-Gods," in Franklin, *Kinyras*, 580n21. They argue that the sign taken as the divine determinative by Selz in the Metal List is an abbreviation for an-na "tin." However, this makes little sense in cases where the type of metal is already specified as something different, such as silver, gold, or copper. For example, Selz compares entries such as "(the) silver knife, (the divine) silver knife" (šum-kù-babbar / ^{d}šum-kù-babbar) from the parallel text *SF* 9 10:18–11:2.

25 Selz, "Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp," 171–172. Many of these entries are also discussed by Mander, *Il Pantheon di Abū Ṣalābīkh*; and Krebernik, "Die Götterlisten aus Fāra," 161–203. Other entries Selz includes in his study are deified persons, such as "the Righteous Exorcist" (^{d}maš-maš-zi) or "the Shepherd" (^{d}utul$_{12}$), and animals. Deified persons and animals are not considered in this study.

26 The transliterations and translations used here follow Selz's suggestions. The divine/deified emblems and paraphernalia include: "the Crown" (^{d}men$_{x}$ [= GÁ x EN]), "a type of Crown(?)" or "the Turban(?)" (^{d}men$_{x}$-bar), "the (deified) Crown (is) a 'Protective Goddess'" (^{d}men$_{x}$-lamma), "the Lady (of) the Crown (is) a 'Protective Goddess'" (^{d}nin-men$_{x}$-lamma), "the Princely Ring(?)" (^{d}ḪAR-nun), "the Staff (of) the Leader" (^{d}ḫendur-sağ), "the Stag Door" or "Aurochs-door" (^{d}ig-alim[-ma]), "the Lapis-Lazuli Necklace" (^{d}lam-sağ-zagìn), "the Scepter" (^{d}PA), and "the Lady Sceptre" (^{d}nin-PA). Some of the deified professions/offices Selz notes include: "the Function/Office (of) the Abzu" (^{d}nám-abzu), "the High Esteem(?)" (^{d}nám-nir), and "the Princeliness(?)" (^{d}nám-nun). Selz notes a number of cultural achievements or properties, such as: "the Bee's Wax(?)" (^{d}DUḪ.LAL$_{2}$), "the Incense" (^{d}šem-ki), "the Burning Reed, the Fire" (^{d}IZI), "the Warming Fire, the Roasting" (^{d}izi-da), "the Brazier" (^{d}izi-ğar), "the Kettle" (^{d}šen), "the Torch" (^{d}izi-lá), and "the Pot"

Their inclusion in the lists and the use of the divine determinative seem to indicate a shared classification as deities, at least for the purposes of the lists. Unfortunately, these lists do not provide additional information about how these entities may have been conceptualized. The presence of some forms preceded by the Sumerian word nin ("lady") may indicate that some were personified, or at least ascribed feminine qualities. Alternatively, these instances of nin + noun in the lists could be understood as genitive constructions: "Lady of X" or goddesses of such-and-such. However, Selz argues that the entities in these lists, including those with nin, were not conceptualized as gods or goddesses with humanlike forms, but rather as "inanimate" objects.[27]

More information can be gleaned from the attestations of cultic objects as recipients of offerings in offering lists and records of votive donations from Old Sumerian Lagaš. In addition to cultic images, these include divine emblems, paraphernalia, cultural achievements, musical instruments, professions, and various other items.[28] Moreover, additional objects appear in theophoric position in personal names in this corpus, where they take on roles or attributes characteristic of deities.[29] In these texts, some of these entities are marked with the divine determinative, while others are not. The offerings to them were often small, which may indicate their lesser importance; however, two texts attest rich votive gifts from a queen to a stela and a drum during festivals, a practice normally restricted to major gods.[30]

In addition, Neo-Sumerian texts attest to cultic objects receiving offerings, being given names, or as the subjects of "mouth-opening" (*pīt pî*) or "mouth-

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(dUTÚL). Abstract qualities include "the Radiance" (dme-lem$_4$), and "the 'Me' (of) the Lady(?)" (dME-NU.NUS-ša$_4$). One musical instrument may also appear in the lists: "the Drum(?)" (dùb).

27 Selz, "Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp," 172.

28 Selz, 173–174. These entries are mostly from the offering lists published as *DP* 53, 55, 66, 69, 71, and 72. Manufactured entities, divine qualities, and divine attributes that are described as receiving offerings include: "statue(s)" (alan), "stela(e)" (na-řú-a), "the Punting Pole/Steering Oar (of) Nindar" (gi-muš-dnin-dar), "the Inscribed/Engraved Ring" (ḪAR-sar-ra), "the Stag Door" or "Aurochs-door" (dig-alim(-ma)), "the Staff of the Leader" (dḫendur-saǧ), "Harp(s)" (balaǧ), "Holy Drum(s)" (ub$_5$-kù) "the Chariot" (gišgigír), "the Scepter" (dPA), "the Scepter (of(?) the) Leader" (dPA-igi-du), and others.

29 Entities occurring as theophoric elements in personal names include: "the Great Pole (of) the Absu" (ddimgal-absu), "the Nose-rope" (dsamàn), and "the Princely Garment" (dTÚG(?)-nun-na).

30 *DP* 69 and *DP* 71; Selz, "Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp," 175. The former records the votive offering of "1 crown (for) the stela" (1 men$_x$ na-řú ⟨-a⟩); the second records the offering of "1 crown, 1 necklace (for) the drum" (1 men$_x$ / 1 gú-za / ub$_5$-kù). Both are dedicated by Šaša, the wife of Uru-inimgina, the king of Lagaš, during festivals.

washing" (*mīs pî*) rituals. These include cultic objects, such as the named weapons belonging to Ningirsu, and musical instruments, such as the copper kettledrum and various harps, as well as thrones.[31] Selz suggests that these objects, qualities, and attributes are essentially indistinguishable from cult statues: "No distinctive feature could be found that functionally separates the divine images proper from 'cultic objects,' including the statues of the ruling élite. They both seem to vary only in their degree of religious importance, not in their conceptualization."[32] Put otherwise, both cultic statues and other objects that "underwent rituals which ensured their divinity" could be conceptualized as independent deities.[33]

How did these objects and abstract concepts become divine? Similarly to Lambert, Selz argues that the deification of objects, qualities, and attributes associated with gods could result from the spread of divinity from the god to other nearby or associated objects or from their use in the cult: "an object used in a cultic context would become 'holy' thereby." He also views humanlike gods as primary, while the deification of objects, qualities, and attributes associated with them are secondary developments.[34] As he puts it, they were "deified only as a theological afterthought."[35] Further arguing that "the Sumerians knew that those items were manmade objects," and so "made relevant distinctions," Selz suggests that they were treated as less important within the hierarchy of the pantheon.[36] Alternatively, one might say that they were considered less pro-

31 For references see Selz, "Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp," 177–178. Examples include: the "mouth-opening" for "the Lord who Smashes the Mountains" (Lugal-kurdub, one of the named weapons of Ningirsu) in *CT* 7, 16; the "mouth-washing ceremony of the copper kettledrum" (*mīs pî lilissi siparri*) in François Thureau-Dangin, *Rituels accadiens* (Paris: Leroux, 1921), 30 f. iii, offerings for Inanna's harp in AnOr 7, 90, offerings for Gula's harp in AUCT 1, 969, and offerings to Enlil's throne (^{d}gu-za-^{d}en-líl-lá or ^{d}gu-za), collected in W. Sallaberger, *Der kultische Kalender der Ur III-Zeit*, 2 vols., Untersuchungen zur Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie 7 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993). For references to deified thrones, see also N. Schneider, "Götterthrone in Ur III und ihr Kult," *Or* 16 (1947): 56–65.

32 Selz, "Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp," 167. Note, however, that Selz distinguishes between the deification of statues of rulers and the deification of the "living" ruler himself: that the statue may have been deified does not mean that the living ruler had this status as well (182). Selz calls cult statues "living hypostases of the gods, living gods indeed." Gerhard J. Selz, "Composite Beings: Of Individualisation and Objectification in Third Millennium Mesopotamia," *ArOr* 72 (2004): 42n43.

33 Selz, "Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp," 179.

34 Selz, 168.

35 Selz, 174.

36 Selz, 184.

totypical, occupying the blurry edges of the graded category of DEITY.[37] For example, Selz argues that deified professions or offices "could only be included in the class of divinities because of an existing *prototypical relation to the divine sphere*."[38] Deified objects, on the other hand, stand "in a synecdochical way for certain concepts," containing as they do the tangible powers of their respective offices, which could be personalized. As Selz explains, "to the Mesopotamians apparently all these functions and concepts were not only represented by, but were also inherent in, these objects: for instance, rulership is inherent and contained in substance in royal insignia … they were thought to contain 'ideas' materially."[39]

Importantly, though he acknowledges that the deification of these entities may seem "problematic," or "even contradictory," to modern interpreters,[40] in one essay Selz argues that this process is in fact a basic feature of thought.[41] On other occasions, however, Selz attributes this phenomenon to differences in cognition or ontology.[42] However, the claim that there are significant differences between ancient and modern cognition is highly problematic. Recent research in cognitive science argues against the idea that the cognitive features of human minds have varied significantly in the last few thousand years. As Harold Torger Vedeler points out, "the few millennia that separate us from the peoples of the ancient Near East are not sufficient for the evolution of radically different brain or sensory morphology, allowing us to safely argue that their systems of cognition were effectively identical to our own."[43] Indeed, as this

37 Selz, "Divine Prototypes," 17. For a further discussion of these deities' relative prototypicality, see ch. 9.

38 Selz, 18 (emphasis original).

39 Selz, 18–19.

40 See Selz, "Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp," 183.

41 See Selz, "Divine Prototypes," 17. He further suggests, following Lakoff, "that thought grows out of bodily experience, that it is imaginative, employing metonym, metaphor, and synecdoche, and that thought has 'gestalt properties' and is hence 'ecological' in the sense that it is related to the structure and meaning of the conceptual systems."

42 See Selz, "Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp," 184: "Gradually we may learn about the ways these peoples conceived of their world and how they put reality into a conceptualized order, sometimes beyond the range of our sense and cognition" (184). See also his comments in "Composite Beings," 49–50: "We cannot avoid the conclusion that the Mesopotamian kind of empiricism was basically different from our own; other cultures may have less problems with it." See also Selz, "Divine Prototypes," 25.

43 Vedeler, "Ancient Near Eastern Omens and Prophecies as a Function of Cognitive Modes," *Journal of Ancient History* 3, no. 2 (2015): 93, https://doi.org/10.1515/jah-2015-9999. Scholars suggest that modern human cognition emerged as early as forty thousand years ago. See Michael Tomasello et al., "Understanding and Sharing Intentions: The Origins of Cul-

book argues, deified objects, qualities, and attributes actually share much in common with other types of god concepts.[44]

Selz's study also raises several other issues. For example, he uses the term *inanimate* to describe these deities, which is confusing, especially since in a number of cases they were subjected to rituals, such as naming, mouth-opening, and mouth-washing that specifically serve to animate objects in ancient Mesopotamia. Assuming these rituals have the same aims as they do when performed on cultic statues and figurines used for apotropaic purposes, the mouth-opening of the weapons of Ningirsu and the mouth-washing of the copper kettledrum, for example, serve to animate these objects, rendering them capable of recognizing and appreciating offerings and able to bestow favor on supplicants in the same way that cult statues would after receiving such rituals.[45] In other words, they became agents, at least to a certain extent.

In addition, records of offerings would seem to indicate that these entities were viewed as having at least some degree of animacy and perhaps even specifically humanlike agency, at least insofar as they have the capacity to appreciate and respond appropriately to gifts. As chapter 1 argues, the giving of offerings suggests that these deities were viewed as having the capacity to appreciate them, and points toward a belief that they are humanlike agents who desire such items and can respond reciprocally. As Anne Katrine de Hemmer Gudme argues, gifts given to a deity testify to its power and portray it as "a responsive and potent patron."[46] Thus, it seems clear that these entities were construed, at least in some cases, as animate and potentially benevolent agents, since the evidence for offerings implies that they were attributed a humanlike desire for certain types of gifts, as well as a humanlike ability to bestow favor in return. Thus, the term *inanimate* seems inappropriate, as it underplays the agency of these types of deities.

3.2 *Evidence from the Neo-Babylonian and Late Babylonian Periods*

At the other end of the timeline of Mesopotamian history, texts from Neo-Babylonian Uruk and Late Babylonian Babylon contain the latest attestations of objects treated as deities from Mesopotamia. In the Neo-Babylonian Eanna archive, deified pieces of cultic paraphernalia, including the "Divine Chariot" (^{d}*narkabtu*), the "Divine Staff" (^{d}*ḫuṭāru*), the "Divine Quiver" (^{d}*išpatu*),

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tural Cognition," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 28 (2005): 675–691, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0140525x05000129.

44 These commonalities are discussed in detail in ch. 9.

45 Walter and Dick, *Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 10–15.

46 Gudme, "Out of Sight, Out of Mind," 12.

the "Divine Star-Shaped Branding Iron" (ᵈ*kakkabtu*), the "Divine *Urigallu* Standards" (ᵈ*urigallu*), and the "Divine *Zapiqtu* Standards" (ᵈ*zapiqtu*), receive offerings of clothing, sacrificial animals, and unprocessed food, and occur in contexts appropriate for deities in other texts, as noted by Beaulieu.[47] They are attested in records of legal proceedings, rituals, and offering lists and records, in which they receive offerings ranging from sheep to textiles to allotments of barley.[48] They thus receive similar treatment to other, anthroform deities attested in the archive.

For example, the "Divine Chariot" (ᵈ*narkabtu*) is attested in offering lists, in which it receives substantial gifts consisting of a variety of animals, including sheep, lambs, turtledoves, ducks, and geese, in similar quantities to those designated for other deities.[49] It appears near the middle of these offering lists, which may indicate its midlevel importance relative to the other deities mentioned, since, according to Beaulieu, the fixed order of the lists of deities in this group of documents "suggests that it reflects their relative theological importance in the local pantheon."[50] However, though Chariot always follows the most prominent deities of Uruk, it generally precedes such well-known anthroform deities as Nergal, Ninurta, Nusku, and Šamaš. It seems to be grouped with deities that resided in the smaller sanctuaries in Uruk (*ekurrātu*), which follow the more important deities that reside in the Eanna temple in these lists.[51] It also appears to have had or been housed in a temple (YBC 3976:32). Thus, this list may reflect a spatial more than hierarchical organization.

Several other objects are also treated as deities in the Eanna archive. The "Divine Staff" (ᵈ*ḫuṭāru*) appears in two records of legal proceedings, in which it is used to grant authority (in these cases, for nefarious purposes) to persons concerning the shearing of sheep and the moving of goats belonging to the temple. As Beaulieu points out, the Divine Staff "appears as a symbol with which representatives of the temple assert their authority in the countryside of Uruk, specifically in connection with the gathering of sheep and goats for grazing and shearing" (YOS 7, 15 and YOS 7, 146).[52] This suggests that the object

47 This section follows the transliterations, normalizations, and translations suggested by Beaulieu, *Pantheon of Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian Period*.

48 For references and excerpts from the relevant texts, see Beaulieu, 295 and 351–355.

49 NCBT 862, NCBT 1213, NBC 4801, PTS 2042, NCBT 670. See Beaulieu, 295.

50 Beaulieu, 73.

51 Beaulieu, 73.

52 Beaulieu, *Pantheon of Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian Period*, 352. On the attestations of this object at Uruk, see also Kristin Kleber, "The Great Adventures of a Small God: New Evidence for the Divine Messenger Staff *Huṭāru*," *Iraq* 80 (2018): 139–150, https://doi.org/10.1017/irq.2018.6. She discusses two additional texts that show that the Staff could

itself carried some authority. The Divine Staff also appears in a few letters, which describe its transport by boat,[53] as well as being the recipient of cloth for two *tabuštu* garments alongside the Divine *Urdimmu*s that receive cloth for a different type of garment in PTS 3230.[54] The "Divine Quiver" (^{d}*išpatu*), which may be associated with Ištar, is reconstructed in a ritual text, though the exact context is unclear (*LKU* 51).[55] The "Divine Star-Shaped Branding Iron" (^{d}*kakkabtu*), also probably associated with Ištar, is attested in one offering list where it shares an offering of one sheep with the Divine *Urdimmu*s. This text describes offerings made on the third of Addaru, the date with the largest quantity of sheep offerings in the Eanna temple. According to Beaulieu, this indicates its lack of importance: "it is not a coincidence that the only text recording an offering to the Divine Star-Shaped Branding Iron should be dated to that day, for only on cultic dates with such huge increases can we expect offerings to have been directed to the minor numinous beings residing in the temple" (YOS 17, 345).[56] Nevertheless, it was apparently capable of appreciating a sheep.

Several standards also seem to have received cultic devotion at Uruk. Standards were used throughout Mesopotamian history to symbolize the divine or royal presence. The "Divine *Urigallu* Standard of Ištar," which may depict a leaping buck, receives gold in one text (YOS 17, 245).[57] The "Divine *Urigallu* Standard of Uṣu-amāssu" receives six ritually selected sheep (NCBT 625). These standards also receive gifts of cloth for "turbans" (*paršīgu*), probably to be understood as tassels decorating the standards where the metal toppers attach to the staff (YOS 7, 183; and PTS 2282).[58] An unspecified "Divine *Urigallu* Standard" (^{d}*urigallu*) occurs in an offering list detailing the distribution of sacrificial animals (*ARRIM* 7, 47). "The Divine *Zapiqtu* Standards"

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occasionally be stolen or otherwise misappropriated (BM 113363 and YOS 7, 146), and suggests that it may have been a "ceremonial mace or sceptre with a twisted shaft and animal protomes," sometimes referred to as a "Doppellöwenkeule" (146).

53 BIN 1, 19 and YOS 3, 71. In the latter text, the writer requests that the Divine Staff be "set up in the boat" (*ina* ^{GIŠ}MÁ *lu-ši-ib*).

54 See Beaulieu, *Pantheon of Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian Period*, 352.

55 As Beaulieu points out, given the association of the quiver with Ištar, "its presence as a deified piece of paraphernalia in the Eanna temple would not be surprising" (*Pantheon of Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian Period*, 353).

56 See Beaulieu, 353.

57 Beaulieu, 354.

58 Beaulieu, *Pantheon of Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian Period*, 354. On the turbans as tassels, see Beate Pongratz-Leisten, "Mesopotamische Standarten in Literarischen Zeugnissen," *BagM* 23 (1992): 329.

(ᵈ*zapiqtu*) receive offerings of barley and other substances in *SWU* 26, *SWU* 64, *SWU* 163, and YBC 9932.[59]

A few additional objects also seem to fit into Beaulieu's category of nonanthropomorphic deities, but are not included by him. For example, several temples are also recorded as recipients of sacrificial offerings in lists from Neo-Babylonian Uruk. Though Beaulieu convincingly argues that in the case of the entries enumerating the animals designated for Eanna, Eanna functions as a collective designation for the three major goddesses of Uruk in this period (Ištar, Nanaya, and Bēltu-ša-Rēš), it is possible that some of the other temples and shrines that appear in these lists were themselves the recipients of the offerings, especially in cases where they are juxtaposed with individual deities. For instance, the *bīt-ḫilṣi* appears in the midst of various anthroform deities in texts such as PTS 3242 and YBC 9238, as does the temple of Marduk, the temple of Nergal, and the temple of Ninurta (see, e.g., YBC 9238, NCBT 1213, NBC 4801). However, unlike the Divine Chariot, which receives the divine determinative more often than not, in most cases these structures do not have the divine determinative; only the name of the god or goddess whose temple/altar is described receives this orthographic marker.[60] This may argue against identifying the temples themselves as deities and may explain why Beaulieu does not include them.

On the other hand, the altars of Bēl and Nabû are listed in prominent position in a number of the lists. In at least two texts, the "Divine Altar of Bēl" receives the divine determinative (ᵈKI.TUŠ ᵈEN), which suggests that the large offerings of several animals recounted therein may have been intended for the altar itself (NCBT 862 and PTS 2042).[61] A third text refers to multiple "Divine Altars" that receive sheep, again written with the divine determinative (ᵈKI.TUŠ.MEŠ; YOS 6, 156).[62] According to Beaulieu, these texts probably refer to "divine symbols standing on small altars" located in the Eanna temple.[63] He

59 As Beaulieu notes, "According to the *CAD* the word *zaqiptu* is only a designation for the Divine *Urigallu* Standards, but there is no conclusive evidence that the two words refer to the one and the same object" (*Pantheon of Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian Period*, 355). See *CAD* Z, s.v. "zaqiptu," 57–58.

60 The Divine Chariot is alternately written ᵈGIGIR, ᵍⁱˢGIGIR, and ᵈ.ᵍⁱˢGIGIR. See the offering lists in ch. 2 of Beaulieu, *Pantheon of Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian Period*, as well as 295.

61 See Beaulieu, 267.

62 Beaulieu, 268.

63 He bases this interpretation upon the alternation of *subtu* with *kakku* (ᵍⁱˢTUKUL) in YBC 9135. He suggests that the altars were located in the Eanna temple and may have been made of wood.

suggests that the symbols that stood on the altars, which may have been the spade of Marduk and the wedge-shaped point of the reed stylus of Nabû respectively, signified more than the metaphorical presence of these gods, "since symbols could be consecrated by the *mīs pî* ritual which transformed the cult statue into a living god."[64] However, despite this assertion, Beaulieu is disinclined to include the altars or symbols among the nonanthropomorphic deities he discusses.[65] Yet, the fact that the Divine Altar of Bēl was distinguished from the anthroform god Marduk is clear from the care the scribes took to differentiate between the two in writing.[66] This points to a separate, independent identity for this object, which the evidence suggests was a nonanthroform symbol treated as itself divine.

Neo-Babylonian Uruk does not provide the latest evidence for this phenomenon. Cultic paraphernalia continued to be treated as deities into the Late Babylonian period.[67] For example, as A.R. George has noted, several weapons, scepters, and emblems appear in copies of a Late Babylonian ritual text from Babylon pertaining to processions (BM 32516 and BM 41239). This text describes "the deities who [come] to Kiš with Bēl," which include the "Divine Sceptre," the "Divine Weapon of Šazu," the "Divine Mace," the "Divine Standard of the Hands," and the "Divine Standard of Wood," among other deities.[68] These entities receive the divine determinative in this text, indicating their classification as deities, and process alongside the anthroform cult statues of gods and goddesses.

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64 Beaulieu, *Panthon of Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian Period*, 268. He cites Walter and Dick's discussion of the performance of the *mis pî* and *pit pî* rituals on insignia and cult objects (Walter and Dick, *Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 10–15). They specifically mention the "mouth opening" of cult symbols such as the weapons of Ningirsu in third millennium sources and the standard and footstool of Šamaš, which had their "mouths" opened at Mari (ARM 18, 54:14–15 and 69:14–15), as well as the *askaru*, the lunar crescent that is a symbol of Sîn (K 63a and K 3367; Walter and Dick, 13–14). As they note, in the latter text, the symbol is explicitly granted to ability to eat, drink, and smell through the ritual.

65 Beaulieu, *Panthon of Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian Period*, 351n1. He explains: "I am excluding from the present discussion the symbols (*kakku*) of Bēl and Nabu, which were substitutes for the anthropomorphic image."

66 Beaulieu, 268–269. Marduk and Marduk-of-the-Courtyard were written ^{d}AMA.UD and ^{d}ŠU and appear with their temples, while the altar of Bēl appears as *šubat* (*šu-bat*, KI.TUŠ, ^{d}KI.TUŠ, ^{giš}KI.TUŠ,) or *kakki* (^{giš}TUKUL) ^{d}Bēl (^{d}EN).

67 As noted by Beaulieu, 351.

68 Following the translations in A.R. George, "Four Temple Rituals from Babylon," in *Wisdom, Gods, and Literature: Studies in Assyriology in Honour of W.G. Lambert*, ed. A.R. George and Irving L. Finkel (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 289–299.

Though George for his part does not comment further on them, Beaulieu classifies most of the deities discussed above as "partly or completely nonanthropomorphic."[69] However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the utility of the dichotomy anthropomorphic and nonanthropomorphic for the study of these deities is questionable for several reasons. In Beaulieu's study, not only does this dichotomy lead to the neglect of certain objects, such as the altars and symbols discussed above, which are themselves probably not humanlike in shape, but which have a close relationship with anthroform deities, these terms also engender confusion. Though Beaulieu's use of anthropomorphic and nonanthropomorphic seem to refer to form, in practice the word *anthropomorphic* is commonly used to refer to both humanlike forms and to humanlike emotion, mind, or behavior (more properly termed anthropopathism), as the previous chapter points out.

With the exception of the daily offerings of a variety of animals to the Divine Chariot, most of the offerings these entities receive are smaller than those given to the major deities, and they seem to have been given comparatively less frequently. Nevertheless, the giving of offerings at all suggests that these entities were perceived as capable of appreciation for (and perhaps even necessitating) gifts of livestock, agricultural produce, and even precious metals and decorative clothing. All of these objects thus receive valuable gifts that humans would typically appreciate. This would suggest a degree of anthropathism, or humanlike desire, or at least a humanlike ability to recognize gifts, as well as implying the agency necessary to respond favorably to them, despite Beaulieu's classification of these deities as nonanthropomorphic. The possibility he raises that these deities are partly nonanthropomorphic is thus more on the mark, since the giving of offerings implies that they were conceptualized as cognizant agents with humanlike tastes and desires, at least to the extent that they could appreciate such offerings, despite their lack of humanlike forms. Classifying these entities as completely nonanthropomorphic seems inaccurate, unless the term is being applied with respect to form alone.

3.3 *Evidence from Various Periods*

The treatment of objects, qualities, and attributes as deities is by no means limited to the very early or late stages of Mesopotamian history, as in the above examples. For example, cultic musical instruments receive treatment appropriate to deities throughout many periods in Mesopotamia, as several scholars

69 Beaulieu, *Pantheon of Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian Period*, 351.

have noted.[70] Many further examples of objects treated as deities from other periods and locations, especially Assyria, are collected by Porter in her seminal essay on this topic.[71] She focuses on examples of manufactured objects, as well as certain natural objects (especially mountains and rivers), in a variety of text types that call them deities, describe them acting as deities, or in which they are marked with the divine determinative or receive offerings. Porter's essay thus provides a convenient survey of the evidence concerning objects treated as deities, or, as she puts it, "non-anthropomorphic entities [that] were thought of, at least at times, as being DINGIRs or *ilu*s" from every period in ancient Mesopotamia.[72]

In addition to drawing on the evidence presented by Selz and Beaulieu, some of the most notable examples Porter adds to the discussion are the architectural features labeled with the divine determinative that feature in the Assyrian *tākultu* ritual, as well as other objects such as "Crown" (*agû*) and "weapon of Aššur" (giš*kakku Aššur*), which are labeled with the divine determinative or described as "residents of one or another temple" in other Assyrian ritual texts.[73] She also analyzes examples of offerings of beer in the Old Babylonian period in Nippur to thrones, and offerings of animals to the ziggurat in Sippar during the Neo-Babylonian period, as well as Neo-Assyrian personal names containing temple's names as theophoric elements, such as Ešarra-šarru-uṣur "O (temple) Esarra, protect the king!" and Esaggil-iddinna "(temple) Esagil has given [an heir]."[74]

Additionally, Porter discusses a number of texts that label or treat chariots belonging to various gods as deities, including personal names from the Ur III period, lists of offerings from the Early Dynastic period, offering records from

70 See Uri Gabbay, "The Balaĝ Instrument and Its Role in the Cult of Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Music in Antiquity: The Near East and the Mediterranean*, ed. Joan Goodnick Westenholz, Yossi Maurey, and Edwin Seroussi, Yuval 8 (Berlin: de Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2014), 129–147, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110340297.129; Gabbay, "Drums, Hearts, Bulls, and Dead Gods: The Theology of the Ancient Mesopotamian Kettledrum," *JANER* 18, no. 1 (2018): 1–47, https://doi.org/10.1163/15692124-12341293; Heimpel, "Balang-Gods," 573–632; Franklin, *Kinyras*, 19–42; and Hundley, "Divinized Instruments and Divine Music," 119–132.

71 Porter, "Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum." Porter also addresses this topic in "Feeding Dinner to a Bed."

72 Porter, "Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum," 160.

73 Porter, 165. The ritual texts are published in Brigitte Menzel, *Assyrische Tempel*, 2 vols. StPohl 10 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), vol. 2, no. 61, T 138–144; and no. 54, T 113–125. Translations and transliterations in this section follow Porter.

74 Porter, "Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum," 163–168. For the Neo-Assyrian personal names, see also Karen Radner, ed. *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, vol. 1, pt. 2, *B–G* (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1999), 405, 407.

the Akkadian period, offering lists from Ninlil's temple at Nippur in the Ur III period, offerings during *tākultu* rituals in the Middle and Neo-Assyrian periods, and offerings at Sippar and Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian period.[75] Interestingly, in personal names with this theophoric element, chariot is sometimes written with both the divine determinative and the GIŠ determinative.[76] The use of two determinatives suggests that both the divine and material natures of these objects were being emphasized. Porter also mentions a few texts that label or treat gods' boats as deities from the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods and in Sumerian personal names.[77]

Porter cites a number of Selz's references to harps or lyres and drums in third millennium texts, as well as his references to weapons of gods that are treated or labeled as deities.[78] In addition, she also adds evidence for the treatment and labeling of gods' weapons as deities from the Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian periods, demonstrating that these entities were deified across multiple periods and in northern Mesopotamia as well.[79] Additionally, Porter collects texts from various periods in which gods' crowns are treated or labeled as deities.[80] These are just a few of the highlights of Porter's detailed and often-cited treatment of this phenomenon.

Similarly to Selz, Porter explains the process through which these objects are deified by following Lambert's influential suggestion that divinity could spread, like a contagion, to certain entities due to their proximity to or association with humanoid gods or goddesses. In her words,

> Mesopotamians came to feel that such objects had become "imbued with divinity" through their intimate contact with a powerful, animate,

75 See the individual references in Porter, "Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum," 172–173.

76 Porter, 172.

77 Porter, 174.

78 Porter, 176–181. Most of these are discussed by Selz ("Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp").

79 Porter cites the *tākultu* texts for most of these references ("Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum," 180–184).

80 Porter, 184–186. Another intriguing reference to crowns treated as deities (not mentioned by Porter) appears in BM 80989, in which the Crowns of Šamaš and Marduk serve as witnesses to a contract, alongside Šamaš and Aya. That the Crown of Šamaš appears alongside Šamaš himself suggests that the crown was not merely a symbol of the deity to whom it belonged. See Seth Richardson, "'The Crowns of Their *bābtum*': On Wives, Wards, and Witnesses," *JAOS* 132, no. 4 (2012): 623–639, https://doi.org/10.7817/jameroriesoci.132.4.0623. As he writes, "the simultaneous witnessing of Šamaš and his crown reveals that these entities were perceived as neither duplicative nor derived—that emblems possessed specific powers in their own right" (632).

> anthropomorphically-conceived god and that as a consequence, they too should be understood as independent locuses of awesome supernatural power, objects now charged with a divinity originally derived from the god with whom they were associated, but nevertheless a separate divine entity from him or her.[81]

Or, as she phrases it elsewhere, possessions of gods "became deities by 'contagion,' by a transfer of divinity to them from the inherently numinous god that owned them and with whom they were in frequent intimate contact."[82]

Porter argues that these entities "appear to have been imagined as non-anthropomorphic in form and nature."[83] According to her, the difference between anthropomorphic gods and these deities is not only their forms, but also the way that their functions are described. While she describes those gods she deems anthropomorphic, as well as deified natural features, as active agents, she argues that most nonanthropomorphic deities, especially possessions of gods, were considered inanimate. Porter summarizes this view as follows:

> [The evidence] suggests a concept of deity of considerable complexity, encompassing within the model of "god" (or deity) both active divine persons, having cognition, volition, and the ability to act upon the world, and also a variety of non-anthropomorphic entities. Some of these, such as illnesses or rivers, while not represented as anthropomorphic, are nevertheless represented in documentary evidence as living beings that were

81 Porter, "Feeding Dinner to a Bed," 323.

82 Porter, "Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum," 191.

83 Porter, 160. Porter does not devote substantial discussion to qualities and attributes in her study, though she notes that these are also types of nonanthropomorphic entities that are treated or labeled as gods in texts from Mesopotamia (see 168n55), and she mentions the abstract concepts of "Justice" (^{d}*mišarum*) and "Truth" (^{d}*kittum*; 186). She chooses to mostly limit her discussion to manufactured entities and natural objects. Like Lambert, Porter does include rivers, mountains, and certain other natural phenomena in her survey. However, she classifies these natural features differently from other nonanthropomorphic entities, arguing that they are depicted as "living" and "active" divine beings, similar to anthropomorphic gods, which also have a strong association with natural features and events (162). Rivers and mountains may have also been imagined as anthropomorphic, at least some of the time: As she points out, Mt. Ebiḫ is described in the myth Inana and Ebiḫ as both a mountain and a bearded man (170). She further notes that "the references to 'mountains' as divine may refer to a grouping of these primarily anthropomorphic gods rather than to an independent non-anthropomorphic collective deity" (171).

> capable of having an active impact on the lives of humans; others, including the beds and thrones of gods, appear to have been conceived of as largely inanimate.[84]

However, as the discussion above suggests, the anthropomorphic and nonanthropomorphic dichotomy is difficult to sustain, given the breadth of qualities associated with anthropomorphism and the fact that many of the texts attesting to these objects as deities imply that they appreciate and can respond to offerings. Porter also suggests that such entities (with the exception of natural objects, such as rivers), lacked "personality."[85] For example, she argues,

> Although they are labeled as gods and presented with offerings from early times until the final days of Mesopotamian civilization, the chariots belonging to gods appear to have been thought of as being deities of a rather limited kind .... Chariots are never referred to as acting on behalf of worshippers, nor are they called upon in hymns or prayers; their activities are confined to serving the gods as a means of transportation, they show no sign of personality, and they have no apparent impact on the lives of worshippers or on the functioning of the cosmos.[86]

She admits, however, that the presentation of food offerings does suggest a level of cognizance is attributed to these entities, and that they were conceptualized as "living beings"; yet, she further asserts that "although they were alive, not all gods appear to have been able (or inclined?) to affect human lives or influence the workings of the cosmos."[87] In other words, she argues that agency and animacy are not ubiquitous characteristics of the Mesopotamian conception of deity. Yet, it makes little sense to go to the trouble of presenting offerings to objects if they are not considered capable of providing an appropriate, favorable response, or affecting human life in some way. In addition, evidence such as the personal names mentioned above certainly supports the idea that these entities were ascribed agency of a specifically superhuman variety.

It is worth mentioning at this point that prayers to objects are also attested among the Mesopotamian sources, though Porter claims that such objects are

84 Porter, "Feeding Dinner to a Bed," 323.

85 Porter, "Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum," 158–159.

86 Porter, 173–174.

87 Porter, 188: "The elaborately ritualized presentation of food offerings even to gods that entirely lack personality suggests that all Mesopotamian gods were understood to be living beings endowed with awareness and feelings."

rarely, if ever, addressed in prayer.[88] For example, there are over a dozen extant examples of *Kultmittelgebete*, prayers to cultic objects, as well as prayers to images (*ṣalmū*) of both deities and other divine beings, and prayers to stars.[89] In addition to astronomical bodies and natural, earthly objects, including a tamarisk, clay pit, the stone hematite, and rivers, manufactured objects are also addressed, such as a representations of the *anḫullû* plant fashioned into an amulet. The prayer addressed to this object, which occurs as part of an antiwitchcraft ritual, implores: "You are the *anḫullû*-plant, the guardian of well-being of Ea and Asalluḫi. Reject witchcraft (and) hateful magic" (*BMS* 12:105).[90] A namburbi prayer similarly invokes divine rites, or perhaps insignia, with the following request: "You splendid rites/insignia (*parṣū*) of gods and goddesses, pay attention" (*Or* 39 125:32). In both of these cases, the addressee is characterized as benevolent or potentially helpful, and the addressee's capacity to hear, understand, and act according to the prayer's request is explicitly outlined.

Porter, like Beaulieu, distinguishes between cult statues, images, or emblems of gods on the one hand, which she argues were not considered to be independent agents, and other manufactured objects, such as gods' possessions, treated as deities on the other. However, exactly which entities are considered emblems is not clear. For example, in her 2006 essay she states: "The weapons of Aššur and Marduk and the standards of various gods … can be shown to have served as portable representations of their associated anthropomorphic god in legal contexts in both Assyria and Babylonia, suggesting they were understood as emblems representing a particular god, not as separate deities in their own right."[91] She makes this distinction despite the evidence that these weapons and standards are "sometimes marked with DINGIR determinatives, presented with offerings, and shown visually in what appear to be ritual settings in Assyrian contexts, where they appear to have played a role of some importance."[92] Yet, in her later 2009 essay, she argues that in many cases weapons of gods "were

88 See Porter, "Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum," 187.

89 Werner Mayer, *Untersuchungen zur Formensprache der babylonischen "Gebetsbeschwörungen,"* StPohl 5 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976), 432–435.

90 Tzvi Abusch and Daniel Schwemer, *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Rituals*, vol. 2, AMD 8.2 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 243–244. See also Mayer, *Untersuchungen zur Formensprache der babylonischen "Gebetsbeschwörungen,"* 434.

91 Porter, "Feeding Dinner to a Bed," 325. See also Porter, "Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum," 168: "Some of the objects identified as deities in our initial sampling may or may not have been non-anthropomorphic deities after all … because they appear to be alternative forms of anthropomorphic great gods rather than independent non-anthropomorphic deities in their own right."

92 Porter, "Feeding Dinner to a Bed," 325.

not emblems representing the more anthropomorphic god who owned them, but were thought of as deities in their own right."[93] The confusion concerning how to tell what is considered a mere emblem and what is considered a deified possession of a god is evident.[94] This issue of independence is a crucial one, to which the section below returns.

Finally, Porter also attributes the presence of these types of deities in ancient Mesopotamian thought to a difference in cognition between ancient and modern minds. She writes: "The conviction of Mesopotamians that material objects such as thrones, harps, and chariots could be living, cognizant divine beings may have its roots in a Mesopotamian understanding of the world in some ways fundamentally different from our own."[95] As argued above, this is overstating the case. As the final chapter of this book shows, the same mental mechanisms and templates that allow for other god concepts also facilitate thinking about these types of deities.[96]

4 Key Issues: A Summary

The studies by Selz, Beaulieu, Porter, and others analyzed above enumerate many examples that conclusively demonstrate that a variety of objects are

93 Porter, "Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum," 182. In this later essay, Porter seems to distinguish between weapons of gods, which she argues could be thought of as independent gods, and standards of gods that could depict weapons, which she interprets as emblems.

94 For a discussion of the difficulties in determining whether an object is considered an emblem that is dependent on the god it represents or is considered an independent entity, see also Joachim Krecher, "Göttersymbole," *RlA* 3:496–497. See also *CAD* Š.3, s.v. "šurinnu"; and *CAD* K, s.v. "kakku"; Johanna Spaey, "Emblems in Rituals in the Old Babylonian Period," in *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the International Conference Organized by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from the 17th to the 20th of April 1991*, ed. Jan Quaegebeur, OLA 55 (Leuven: Peeters; Departement Oriëntalistiek, 1993), 411–420; Steven W. Holloway, "The ^{giš}*kakki Aššur* and Neo-Assyrian Loyalty Oaths," in *Historiography in the Cuneiform World: Proceedings of the XLV Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*, ed. T. Abusch et al., 2 vols. (Bethesda: CDL, 2001), 1:239–266. It seems best to evaluate the evidence concerning these types of entities on a case-by-case basis. For example, Jerrold S. Cooper determines that only two of the weapons of Ninurta were considered independent deities (Šarur and Šargaz) in the first millennium. Cooper and Eugen Bergmann, *The Return of Ninurta to Nippur: An-gim dím-ma*, AnOr 52 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1978), 122 (as previously noted by Porter, "Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum," 182n107).

95 Porter, "Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum," 189.

96 These mental mechanisms and templates are discussed in detail in ch. 9.

treated as deities in different types of texts from Mesopotamia. Selz also points toward a number of more abstract qualities and attributes that are characterized as deities through their inclusion in early deity lists.[97] However, as noted above, though they present important evidence for this phenomenon, these previous studies rely on problematic pairs of contrasting adjectives to describe these and other types of deities, terms that are more confusing than illuminating: nonanthropomorphic versus anthropomorphic and inanimate versus animate.

For example, Selz refers to deified cultic objects as inanimate, despite the fact that they sometimes receive the rituals of mouth-washing or mouth-opening, which Assyriologists understand as serving precisely the purpose of animating the patient upon which they are performed. Similarly, Porter characterizes anthropomorphic deities as humanlike both in form and agency, while asserting that most nonanthropomorphic deities are inactive, and lack agency and personality, as well as lacking humanlike forms. Beaulieu also distinguishes between anthropomorphic and nonanthropomorphic types of deities, but doesn't include deities' altars or symbols in the latter category, though it is unlikely that they had humanlike forms, presumably because of their close relationship with the anthroform gods they represent. Yet, he considers standards to be nonanthropomorphic deities, despite the fact that standards also commonly symbolize a god or goddess. Part of the issue with the confusing and inconsistent way in which these terms are applied stems from the complexity of the concept of anthropomorphism, as discussed in chapter 1.

Another problematic key concept in these studies is animacy. Is it the case that only some deities have animacy in the evidence from Mesopotamia, as Porter suggests? Animacy is associated strongly with the concept of agency. As discussed in chapter 1, agency includes such qualities as the capacity for self-propulsion, teleological action in pursuit of goals, the capacity to react and interact, and the possession of cognitive capacities such as thinking and the ability to recognize other agents. With this definition in mind, Selz and Porter's suggestion that deified objects are inanimate seems quite confusing, especially since the latter attributes such features as independence, cognizance, desire, and the ability to be pleased to these objects, which are all distinctive traits of animate agents. Another paragraph from Porter's earlier essay, "Feeding Dinner to a Bed," demonstrates the confusing distinction Porter draws between anthro-

97 Such entities are not discussed by Beaulieu and Porter, though Porter does briefly acknowledge their occurrence in the data.

pomorphism and the attribution of the ability to be pleased and feel favorably toward human beings:

> the presentation of food offerings to gods such as divine chariots, thrones, and beds implies that food offerings were not presented to gods simply because they needed nourishment .... Just as one invites one's employer to dinner in an elegant restaurant, not because you think he or she needs nourishment, but because you hope to please him, honor him, and make him feel well-disposed toward you, in the same way, I suspect, Assyrians and other Mesopotamians presented sheep, beer, barley, incense, and the occasional dead lion to their gods primarily to honor them, to propitiate them, and to win their favor, and not simply because gods were anthropomorphic beings who needed dinner.[98]

It seems more likely that these objects were in fact perceived as animate agents, with the capacity to appreciate human's cultic attention in a rather humanlike way.[99] Otherwise, giving them offerings would have been rather pointless!

These studies also raise the issue of independence as a key criterion for deities. For example, the evidence from Mesopotamia does not make it entirely clear to what degree emblems were considered independent from the gods they represented. As noted above, Porter herself goes back and forth on which possessions or objects were thought of as independent deities. What is clear is that for many scholars, independence seems to be an essential quality of deity. In other words, what a scholar classifies as a deity seems directly related to the degree of independence the scholar views a given entity as possessing. This study evaluates the evidence on a case-by-case basis, insofar as the data allow, to determine whether an object that symbolizes a deity is itself considered to be independent.

Another issue raised by two of these studies is how and why objects, qualities, and attributes are deified in ancient Mesopotamia. Both Selz and Porter speculate about the "contagious" effects of divinity and posit differences be-

98 Porter, "Feeding Dinner to a Bed," 328. See also Irene Winter's discussion of temples as agents in Mesopotamia. Winter, "Agency Marked, Agency Ascribed: The Affective Object in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Art's Agency and Art History*, ed. Robin Osborne and Jeremy Tanner, New Interventions in Art History (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 43–58.

99 See also Pongratz-Leisten and Sonik, who use the term *animate* "to describe the awakening of specific divine images or objects as well as the *presencing* ... of the divine within particular material matrices" ("Between Cognition and Culture," 8, emphasis original).

tween ancient Mesopotamian and modern scholars' cognition to explain this phenomenon. The final chapter of this book will unpack such assertions in more detail, after reviewing additional evidence from the ancient Near East. Does the evidence support the idea that divinity spreads like a contagion? It has been suggested above that radical differences in cognition between ancient and modern minds is not supported by research in cognitive science. Chapter 9 expands this discussion, demonstrating that instead of showcasing fundamental differences between the minds and cognition of ancient people and modern scholars, both concepts of deity that include objects, qualities, and attributes and concepts of deity that focus on gods and goddesses with humanlike forms are actually produced by the same cognitive processes and templates.

Finally, the studies discussed above raise the question of how best to render the ancient designations for objects, qualities, and attributes treated as deities into contemporary English. Previous studies have been inconsistent in the way they translate the Sumerian or Akkadian terms into English, which can lead to confusion in interpreting them. For example, Selz translates "the Brazier" for Sumerian ^{d}izi-ĝar but renders ^{d}šum-kù-babbar as "(the divine) silver knife." Notice that the former is capitalized but lacks the adjective "divine," while the latter is lower-case with "divine" added in parentheses. Beaulieu and George, on the other hand, choose to capitalize the English translation of Akkadian nouns designating deified objects and include the adjective "divine" in their titles, emphasizing their divinity: for example, "Divine Chariot," or "Divine Sceptre." Porter uses a variety of translations, sometimes capitalizing the English ("Crown") and sometimes not ("weapon of Aššur"). In a cross-cultural study such as this, consistency is required. Thus, for the remainder of this book any ancient language designation for a given entity that is treated as a deity is rendered in English with capitalization of the first letter of the noun or major elements in the noun phrase that identify it. The divine determinative is recorded for transliterations or normalizations, when it appears, but is not included in the English translation.

Over the course of the next few chapters, this book examines manufactured objects, as well as qualities and attributes that are treated as deities in texts from several other regions of the ancient Near East with the issues addressed above in mind. Many of the objects, qualities, and attributes treated as deities in texts from elsewhere are quite similar to those attested in the evidence from Mesopotamia. Importantly, like gods that are conceptualized in primarily humanlike form, deified objects, qualities, and attributes also appear to be conceptualized as cognizant agents with humanlike desires and the ability to respond favorably to cultic attention across the ancient Near East. In addition,

as chapter 9 argues, though this phenomenon may seem, at first glance, to be highly unusual, the same cognitive processes that lead to concepts of anthroform gods who possess superhuman powers also produce concepts of deified objects, qualities, and attributes.

CHAPTER 3

The Evidence from Ebla

The deification of objects, qualities, and attributes in ancient Mesopotamia has received the most attention in scholarship up until now. As chapter 2 demonstrated, these entities were treated in similar ways to anthroform deities in a variety of texts. Though they may not be described as humanlike in form, they fulfill many of the same functions and roles as gods and goddesses. Moreover, the records of offerings given to them point toward their conception as potentially benevolent agents who are capable of appreciating such gifts. Although a number of Assyriologists have examined this phenomenon, Mesopotamia is not the only place in the ancient Near East where it is attested. This chapter provides the first detailed analysis of the evidence for manufactured objects and qualities and attributes as deities from Early Bronze Age Ebla (modern Tell Mardikh). Compared to the evidence from Mesopotamia, this dataset has hitherto remained underexplored.

The archives from Ebla provide much of the basis for modern scholars' reconstructions of religious practices in and around the ancient city.[1] Not only do the offering records and ritual texts contain information about the cultic attention given to various deities, pertinent information is also found in many other types of documents, including administrative and legal texts. In addition, personal names attested at Ebla feature not only anthroform deities, but also objects, qualities, and attributes as theophoric elements. In both texts and personal names, the latter receive similar treatment, perform the same roles, and/or are described as possessing some of the same qualities as other, more commonly studied gods and goddesses.

Of course, it is crucial to keep in mind that even large archives of material, such as the corpus from Ebla, only represent part of the religiosity of the people who inhabited a particular site during a given chronological period. For exam-

1 For a discussion of the term *archive* and its usefulness, see Jacob Lauinger, "An Excavated Dossier of Cuneiform Tablets from Level VII Alalaḫ?," *BASOR* 362 (2011): 22–23, https://doi.org/10.5615/bullamerschoorie.362.0021. Lauinger uses the term *archive* "to designate a collection of cuneiform tablets and/or seal impressions that were received or produced by an administrative body, its officials, or an individual acting in private capacity, insofar as those tablets were intended to remain in the custody of that body, official, or person." This and the following chapters take this as a working definition. See also Theo van den Hout, "On the Nature of the Tablet Collections of Hattuša," *SMEA* 47 (2005): 280.

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ple, documents detailing official or royally supported religious practices, such as temple or state-sponsored offerings and rituals, do not necessarily showcase all of the practices of nonelite individuals or families within a household context. In the case of Ebla, the majority of the textual documentation was found in the palace, and primarily reflects the concerns of the royal family and court officials. But while these documents may not fully represent the day-to-day practices of the majority of Ebla's inhabitants, the onomasticon can provide insight into household or family religion,[2] even if it too mostly reflects the personal religion of the elite.[3] Moreover, there may be fewer differences between the religion of the state and that of the majority of the population than sometimes assumed.[4]

Unlike the administrative documents that make up the majority of the archival documents from Ebla, which clearly relate to local affairs, a number of the literary and lexical texts found in the archives probably originated in Mesopotamia or Mari.[5] Many of these texts were part of the education of scribes, arriving at Ebla as part of a scribal curriculum alongside the cuneiform script. As Rubio notes, "Although the local language (Eblaite) was Semitic and very close to Akkadian, the texts from Ebla (lexical lists included) belong to a cultural and scribal continuum that stretched from Southern Mesopotamia (Fāra, Abū Ṣalābīḫ) to northern Syria .... Ebla texts mention scribes coming from both Kish (near Babylon) and Mari."[6] These texts provided the scribes at Ebla with templates for their own literary works.[7] Nevertheless, the social, economic, and religious structures at Ebla should not be assumed to be identical to those in Mesopotamia.

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2 See Dennis Pardee, "An Evaluation of the Proper Names from Ebla from a West Semitic Perspective: Pantheon Distribution according to Genre," in *Eblaite Personal Names and Semitic Name-Giving: Papers of a Symposium Held in Rome July 15–17, 1985*, ed. Alfonso Archi, ARES 1 (Rome: Missione archeologica in Siria, 1988), 144.

3 See Alfonso Archi, review of *Il in the Personal Names of the Third Millennium BC: Studies in Third Millennium Sumerian and Akkadian Personal Names*, by Robert A. Di Vito, *OLZ* 91 (1996): 141–142.

4 See Brett Maiden's argument that the dichotomy between "popular" and "official" religion has been overstated. Maiden, *Cognitive Science and Ancient Israelite Religion*.

5 Gonzalo Rubio, "The Inventions of Sumerian: Literature and the Artifacts of Identity," in *Problems of Canonicity and Identity Formation in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia*, ed. Gojko Barjamovic and Kim Ryholt, CNIP 43 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2016), 239–243.

6 Rubio, "Inventions of Sumerian," 239.

7 Rubio, 252.

1 Sources from Ebla

Since their discovery in 1975, the royal archives of Ebla have shed new light on religion in Syria in the third millennium BCE.[8] The large site of the ancient city of Ebla is located about fifty-five kilometers south of Aleppo in northwestern Syria. It has a central, raised acropolis surrounded by a lower town, with a peripheral ridge separating it from its surroundings. It was excavated from 1964 until 2010 by the Italian Archaeological Expedition to Syria of Sapienza University of Rome.[9] Though a few remnants may date to as early as 3500–3000, the city was at its height from the mid-third to the mid-second millennium BCE.

Ebla was destroyed and rebuilt at least three times during its history. Remains of an administrative building or palace (Building G2) underneath Palace G have been dated to the Early Bronze III period, and it has been suggested that the construction of this structure may coincide with the initial palace organization and the beginning of the dynasty of the kings of Ebla recorded in TM.74.G.120.[10] The Old Syrian town was finally destroyed for the last time around 1600 BCE.[11] However, before its first major destruction, probably by Sargon of Akkad in around 2300, Ebla had become one of the most important cities of the Early Bronze Age, being advantageously situated along two major trade routes.[12] During the decades when the palace archives were utilized, the

8 A cache of forty-two tablets in a jar were discovered prior to this, in 1974. See Alfonso Archi "'Palace' at Ebla: An Emic Approach," in *Der Palast im antiken und islamischen Orient: 9. Internationales Colloquium der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft, 30. März–1. April 2016, Frankfurt am Main*, ed. Dirk Wicke, CDOG 9 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2019), 6.

9 For a summary of the excavation history of the site, see Paolo Matthiae, "A Long Journey: Fifty Years of Research on the Bronze Age at Tell Mardikh/Ebla," in *Ebla and Its Landscape: Early State Formation in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Paolo Matthiae and Nicolò Marchetti (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast, 2013), 35–48; and Matthiae, "50 Years of Ebla Discovery: Past, Present and Future," in *Studies on the Archaeology of Ebla after 50 Years of Discoveries*, ed. Paolo Matthiae et al. (Damascus: Les annals archéologiques arabes syriennes, 2014–2015), 9–13.

10 Michael C. Astour, "An Outline of the History of Ebla (Part 1)," in *Eblaitica: Essays on the Ebla Archives and Eblaite Language, Vol. 3*, ed. Cyrus H. Gordon and Gary A. Rendsburg (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 19–24. See also Agnese Vacca, "Before the Royal Palace G: The Stratigraphic and Pottery Sequence of the West Unit of the Central Complex; The Building G5," *Studia Eblaitica* 1 (2015): 1–32, https://doi.org/10.13173/STEBLA/2015/1/1.

11 Much smaller settlements are attested through the Roman-Byzantine period. See Matthiae, "Long Journey," 36–38; and Matthiae, *Ebla: Archaeology and History* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 18.

12 On the precise date of Ebla's destruction, see the radiocarbon analysis of plant samples from Royal Palace G, which date to between 2367 and 2293 BCE, in Lucio Calcagnile, Gianluca Quarta, and Marisa D'Elia, "Just at That Time: ^{14}C Determinations and Analysis from

city of Ebla was a substantial urban center spanning 140 acres.[13] At that time, Ebla's territory reached east to the Euphrates River, and included Alalakh and Karkemish to the north, and Hamath and Tunip to the south, as well as other cities and villages; some independent coastal city-states as well as city-states further north and along the banks of the Euphrates were probably also under Ebla's authority.[14]

The Ebla royal archives, which consist of approximately seventeen thousand clay tablets and fragments with cuneiform writing, were distributed across the Great Archive (L.2769) and other, smaller rooms near the Court of Audience and the Administrative Quarter amid the remains of Royal Palace G.[15] The palace was a sizeable edifice that may have spanned up to twenty thou-

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EB 4A Layer," in Matthiae and Marchetti, *Ebla and Its Landscape*, 450–458. Michael Astour examines the different possibilities for the date of the destruction of Palace G at Ebla from a historical perspective. Astour, "A Reconstruction of the History of Ebla (Part 2)," in *Eblaitica: Essays on the Ebla Archives and Eblaite Language, Vol. 4*, ed. Cyrus H. Gordon and Gary A. Rendsburg (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 58–76.

13 Astour, "Outline of the History of Ebla (Part 1)," 13.

14 Alfonso Archi, "Eblaite in Its Geographical and Historical Context," in *The Akkadian Language in Its Semitic Context: Studies in the Akkadian of the Third and Second Millennium BC*, ed. Guy Deutscher and N.J.C. Kouwenberg, PIHANS 106 (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2006), 99; Astour "Outline of the History of Ebla (Part 1)," 51.

15 Note that only some of the documents were stored in physical spaces that can be designated as archives, such as the Great Archive (L.2769) and the Small Archive (L.2712). The rest qualify as part of the archives in the sense that they are an organized collection of documents. These are sometimes classified as "primary" and "secondary" archives. See Paolo Matthiae, "The Archives of the Royal Palace G of Ebla: Distribution and Arrangement of the Tablets according to the Archaeological Evidence," in *Cuneiform Archives and Libraries: Papers Read at the 30e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Leiden 4–8 July 1983*, ed. Klaas R. Veenhof, PIHANS 57 (Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1986), 57–58; and Luca Peyronel, "Il palazzo e il mercante: Riflessioni sui sistemi di scambio nella Siria del III millennio a.C.," in *L'ufficio e il document: I luoghi, i modi, gli strumenti dell'amministrazione in Egitto e nel Vicino Oriente antico*, ed. Clelia Mora and Patrizia Piacentini, Quaderni di Acme 83 (Milan: Cisalpino, 2006), 260–261. On the findspots of the tablets from the Great Archive, see Erica Scarpa, "The Digitization Process of the Spatial Data on the Epigraphic Discoveries from the Central Archive L.2769 (Palace G, Ebla): A Comprehensive Overview," *Studia Eblaitica* 9 (2023): 1–63; and Francesco Di Filippo, Massimo Maiocchi, and Erica Scarpa, "La geo-localizzazione del materiale epigrafico del Grande Archivio L.2769 (Ebla, Siria): Obiettivi e prospettive nel quadro del progetto Ebla Digital Archives," *Scienze dell'Antichità* 29 (2023): 133–146. The tablets are published in two main series: ARET and MEE. Many of the ARET texts are now also available online, through the Ebla Digital Archives Project (EbDA; http://ebda.cnr.it/). For an updated account of the publication of different groups of texts from the archives, see Alfonso Archi, "Publication of the Archives of Ebla: A Report on the Work in Progress," *Studia Eblaitica* 8 (2022): 29–42.

sand square meters, covering much of the acropolis and its slopes.[16] Most of this tablet collection, which probably originally consisted of over five thousand individual documents, many of which were stored on wooden shelves and mud-brick benches,[17] is in Eblaite, an East Semitic language or dialect preserved only by these documents, which is challenging to interpret since it is largely written using Sumerian and Akkadian logograms.[18] The tablets date to the Early Bronze IVA period, and are thought to span approximately three generations, or around fifty years, during the reigns of the kings Igriš-Ḫalab, Irkab-Damu, and Iš'ar-Damu.[19] The oldest documents comprise a few dozen tablets probably transferred from a previous archive, and are dated to the reign of Igriš-Ḫalab, the antepenultimate king of Ebla who died about forty-five years before the city's first major destruction.[20] The rest of the tablets are dated to the reigns of the following two rulers.

16 On the royal palace, see Paolo Matthiae, "The Royal Palace: Functions of the Quarters and the Government of the *Chora*," in Matthiae and Marchetti, *Ebla and Its Landscape*, 49–65. Approximately 4,500 m^2 of the palace complex have been excavated so far (49).

17 For the locations of the tablets, see Matthiae, "Royal Palace," 52; Alfonso Archi, "The Archives of Ebla," in *Ebla and Its Archives: Texts, History, and Society*, SANER 7 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), 81–84, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781614517887-009.

18 For concise overviews of the Eblaite language, see Amalia Catagnoti, "Eblaite," in *A Companion to Ancient Near Eastern Languages*, ed. Rebecca Hasselbach-Andee (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), 149–162, https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119193814.ch8; and John Huehnergard and Christopher Woods, "Akkadian and Eblaite," in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World's Ancient Languages*, ed. Roger D. Woodward (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), 218–280. For a comprehensive grammar of Eblaite, see Amalia Catagnoti, *La grammatica della lingua di Ebla*, Quaderni di Semitistica 29 (Florence: Università di Firenze, 2012). The exact position of Eblaite in the Semitic language family has been debated. See the recent discussions in Gonzalo Rubio, "Eblaite, Akkadian, and East Semitic," in Deutscher and Kouwenberg, *Akkadian Language in Its Semitic Context*, 110–139; and Maria Vittoria Tonietti, "Classification of the Ebla Language: Developments from the Ebla Archive and Contemporary Evidence," *Studia Eblaitica* 4 (2018): 1–16, https://doi.org/10.13173/STEBLA/2018/1/1.

19 For radiocarbon dates, see Calcagnile, Quarta, and D'Elia, "Just at That Time," 450–458; Agnese Vacca, *The Early Bronze Age III and IVA1 at Tell Mardikh-Ebla and Its Region: Stratigraphic and Ceramic Sequences*, Materiali e studi archeologici di Ebla 10 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2020), 206–208.

20 Alfonso Archi, "Archival Record-Keeping at Ebla 2400–2350 BCE," in *Ancient Archives and Archival Traditions: Concepts of Record-Keeping in the Ancient World*, ed. Maria Brosius, Oxford Studies in Ancient Documents (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 17, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199252459.003.0002. Archi suggests that some evidence indicates that writing at Ebla may have been introduced from Mari immediately prior to the reign of Igriš-Ḫalab, toward the end of the twenty-fifth century ("Archives of Ebla," 86).

Alongside the excavated remains of two temples, the palace archives from Ebla are the most important source for reconstructing Ebla's religion.[21] The tablets found in the Great Archive (L. 2769), and in a few other nearby rooms and vestibules, are mostly administrative, though other types of documents, including just over seventy chancery documents, some lexical texts, a few literary texts, ritual texts concerning kingship and the queen's marriage, and incantations are represented as well.[22] The administrative texts primarily deal with economic transactions, including the distribution of textiles and objects made of copper, silver, or gold, and the delivery of textiles and metals. Fewer administrative texts describe agricultural production, as well as the dispensation of sheep and other foodstuffs.[23]

A number of texts from the palace archives contain information about deities. Many of the administrative texts describe offerings or allocations of textiles, metal and metal objects, or various foodstuffs and livestock destined for the deities. Theophoric personal names also contain the names or epithets of deities. The small quantity of texts describing rituals concerning kingship also mention a number of deities. Otherwise, besides a few entries in lexical texts, and the incantations, there are only three literary texts that mention deities. The administrative documents, as well as the three texts describing kingship rituals, seem to most clearly represent local religious traditions at Ebla, though no doubt other traditions, including those originating in Mesopotamia, were incorporated at Ebla as well. Thus, these documents form the main basis for the analysis below.

2 Objects, Qualities, and Attributes as Deities at Ebla

Previous reconstructions of the pantheon of Ebla during the late third millennium have relied most heavily on the records of offerings found among the many administrative texts from Ebla, with reference also to theophoric ele-

21 For a concise overview of the Red Temple and the Temple of the Rock, see Matthiae, *Ebla*, 74–83. See also Matthiae, "Un grand temple de l'époque des Archives dans l'Ébla protosyrienne: Fouilles à Tell Mardikh 2004–2005," *CRAI* 2006: 447–493, https://doi.org/10.3406/crai.2006.86960.

22 Alfonso Archi, "Archives of Ebla," 77–92; Archi, "Archival Record-Keeping at Ebla 2400–2350 BCE," 19; and Astour, "Outline of the History of Ebla (Part 1)," 101–103. On the find-spots of the tablets, see Scarpa, "Digitization Process of the Spatial Data on the Epigraphic Discoveries from the Central Archive L.2769 (Palace G, Ebla)"; and Di Filippo, Maiocchi, and Scarpa, "La geo-localizzazione del materiale epigrafico del Grande Archivio L.2769."

23 Archi, "Archival Record-Keeping at Ebla 2400–2350 BCE," 19–32.

ments occurring in personal names.[24] More properly, any reconstructions of the deities of Ebla pertain specifically to the situation under the reigns of the last two kings before the city's first destruction at the end of the third millennium, since the texts containing references to deities date from the reigns of Irkab-Damu and Iš'ar-Damu. Though it is tempting to focus on the most prominent deities, such as Kura, the patron god of kingship and the city and his consort, Barama, who received the largest offerings in the cult, as well as other popular anthroform goddesses and gods such as Išḫara and Hadda, the catalog of deities attested at Ebla also includes a number of references to features of the landscape and abstract concepts related to kinship, as well as objects, qualities, and attributes.[25]

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24 Shortly after their discovery, Alfonso Archi cited the offering records from the archives of Palace G as the most important source regarding the deities of Ebla not only due to their quantity, but also because they describe the local pantheon. Archi, "Les dieux d'Ebla au IIIe millenaire avant J.C. et les dieux d'Ugarit," *Annales archéologiques arabes syriennes* 29–30 (1978–1980): 167–171. Francesco Pomponio and Paolo Xella also rely largely on administrative records of offerings, as well as anthroponyms and toponyms (*Les dieux d'Ebla*).

25 See, for example, Matthiae's discussion of the major gods of Ebla (*Ebla*, 67–71). He suggests that Kura and Barama were the "supreme divine couple … celestial archetypes of the earthly royal couple" and that Kura is likely to be the god referred to as the "god of the king" in many Eblaite texts, while Išḫara was a goddess of love and patroness of kingship, and Hadda is the storm-god. Alfonso Archi focuses on the major deities Kura, Hadda, Rašap, Hadabal, and Ganana in "Ritualization at Ebla," *JANER* 13, no. 2 (2013): 214–227, 233, https://doi.org/10.1163/15692124-12341253. On Kura, see also Walther Sallaberger, "Kura, Youthful Ruler and Martial City-God of Ebla," in *Ebla and Beyond: Ancient Near Eastern Studies after Fifty Years of Discoveries at Tell Mardikh; Proceedings of the International Congress Held in Rome, 15th–17th December 2014*, ed. Paolo Matthiae, Frances Pinnock, and Marti D'Andrea (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2018), 107–140. On Išḫara, see Doris Prechel, *Die Göttin Išḫara: Ein Beitrag zur altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte*, ALASP 11 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996); Archi, "Divinités sémitiques et divinités de substrat: Le cas d'Išḫara et d'Ištar à Ebla," *MARI* 7 (1993): 71–78; and Archi, "Išḫara and Aštar at Ebla: Some Definitions," in *The Third Millennium: Studies in Early Mesopotamia and Syria in Honor of Walter Sommerfeld and Manfred Krebernik*, ed. Ilya Arkhipov, Leonid Kogan, and Natalia Koslova, CM 50 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 1–34, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004418080_002. On deities at Ebla, see also Pietro Mander, *La religione di Ebla* (*XXV/XXIV sec. a. C.*) (Rome: Aracne, 2005), 18–82. See also the relevant sections in Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*. Matthiae briefly mentions "Crown," "Two Baliḫ" (a tributary of the Euphrates), and "Ammarig" (a mountain) as "minor gods of the Eblaite pantheon," as well as "divine entities who stand for personifications of tribal bonds of kinship" that appear in theophoric position in personal names, such as "Blood" and "Clan," as well as a few qualities that appear in personal names (*Ebla*, 71–72). Archi discusses "Ammarik" ("Ritualization at Ebla," 224); and some of the deified locales and mountains. Archi, "Studies in the Ebla Pantheon II," Or 66, no. 4. (1997): 421–425.

Francesco Pomponio and Paolo Xella's work constitutes the most comprehensive list of the deities of Ebla that has appeared thus far.[26] However, the encyclopedic nature of this work precludes more than a brief philological and historical/religious descriptions of each entry. Beyond suggesting that some of the divine names attested at Ebla may be associated with certain objects, qualities, or attributes, there is little discussion of the nature of these entities. In addition, Pomponio and Xella do not include in their catalog certain possessions of gods that appear to receive offerings in some records. They are also skeptical about whether qualities and attributes that appear in the texts and as theophoric elements in personal names should be interpreted as epithets used as substitutes for deities' proper names, or as "ND véritables."[27] Instead, they suggest that when qualities appear to be treated as deities in texts or personal names, they are usually circumlocutions for major anthroform gods and goddesses' names.

Of particular interest to this study are several objects, qualities, and attributes that receive offerings in the texts from Ebla, including Crown/Two Crowns, City, various objects belonging to Hadda, Išḫara, and Rašap, and some possible deified qualities. A number of other objects, qualities, and attributes occur in theophoric position in personal names, but are not attested elsewhere in the evidence from Ebla as deities. These are discussed further below.

The first object of interest is ^{d}*a-gú*(*m*), which may be interpreted as "Crown," or "Two Crowns" when written with the number 2 or reduplicated (2 ^{d}*a-gúm*, ^{d}*a-gú* ^{d}*a-gú*).[28] The Akkadian term *agû*, which has the primary meaning of "crown," can indicate both a particular crown worn by an individual or deity, or the crown more generally as an insignia designating rank; it occurs with the divine determinative as the name of a deity several times in Akkadian texts.[29] In the Ebla archives, there are a number of attestations of offerings to Crown/Two Crowns and several attestations of personnel associated with

26 This study owes much to the authors' collection of attestations of divine names in the tablets from Ebla, though the analyses offered differ from theirs on many points. In the remainder of this chapter, transliterations and citations follow the conventions used by Pomponio and Xella.

27 See the discussion in Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 5. The authors do not elucidate what criteria would indicate that an entity should be considered an "ND véritable."

28 This deity is discussed by Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 19–23. See also Pietro Mander, "Les dieux et le culte à Ébla," in *Mythologie et religion des sémites occidentaux*, ed. Gregorio del Olmo Lete, 2 vols., OLA 162 (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 1:59–60.

29 See *CAD* A.1, s.v. "agû," 153–157, esp. A 3′. The *CAD* notes that this term occurs in Akkadian texts from Mesopotamia at least three other times with the divine determinative: alongside Aššur in 3R 66 i 14, alongside Nabû later in the same text, and in *KAV* 42 i 1.

Crown/Two Crowns in administrative texts. In addition, Crown of Aḫdamu (^{d}*a-gúm a-ḫa-da-mu*^{ki}) appears in an administrative text (TM.75.G.2464 v.XVI 24), and there are two references to Crown of Binaš/Nenaš in texts concerning rituals associated with the royal mausoleum (^{d}*a-gú* NE-*na-áš*^{ki}, ^{d}*a-gúm* NE-*na-áš*^{ki}; ARET 11, 1, 55; and 11, 2, 58). Additionally, there is one attestation of Crown of Saza (^{d}*a-gúm* sa-za$_{x}^{ki}$) in an administrative text (ARET 4, 17, 99), and a reference to cultic personnel associated with Crown of Saza (^{d}*a-gú* sa-za$_{x}^{ki}$) appears in another (ARET 3, 666 I 1). Crown (*a-gú*) also occurs as a theophoric element in over a dozen distinct anthroponyms and two toponyms.[30]

In these texts, Crown, or Two Crowns, is treated as a deity (or perhaps as two deities) in several ways. First, Crown/Two Crowns receives a variety of offerings and is associated with cultic personnel at Ebla. For example, in several administrative tablets, Crown/Two Crowns receives offerings including sheep (ARET 7 150 r. IV 7–v. I 2, alongside Guladu), flour (ARET 10, 100 r. III 26–33), bread (TM.75.G.306 v. III 1–II 1; and TM.75.G.526 v. III 1–II 1), and silver (TM.75.G.2428 r. VI 17–23; 2507 r. I 9–15).[31] In other texts, pairs of individuals (šeš-2-ib) linked to the palace who played roles in cultic rituals are associated with Crown/Two Crowns and receive offerings of clothing, sometimes associated with the twelfth month of the year.[32] Crown/Two Crowns is consistently labeled as a deity through the use of the divine determinative in all the texts in which it is attested. Two Crowns is also explicitly described as two deities in at least one text: "Two deities, the Two Crowns" (2 dingir 2 ^{d}*a-gú*; ARET 1, 4, 79′). Crown is associated with the little-known goddess Guladu in another text. They may form a consort pair; two sheep are offered to them (ARET 7 150).[33]

Finally, as mentioned above, Crown has multiple local manifestations, a common trait of major deities in ancient Near Eastern pantheons.[34] Two of the

30 Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 21–22. Several examples, as well as the orthography in personal names, are discussed in more detail below.

31 This was an offering from an individual from Mari.

32 See ARET 1, 3, 64; ARET 1, 4, 79′; ARET 3, 457 v. IV. On the šeš-2-ib (or šeš-II-ib), see Alfonso Archi, "ŠEŠ-II-IB: A Religious Confraternity," in Gordon and Rendsberg, *Eblaitica*, vol. 4, 23–56. He notes that individuals who served in the role, who came from prominent families, were not tied to a single deity, but attended a number of different rituals for different deities (25). They typically received garments for their participation in rituals (30).

33 Alfonso Archi identifies them as a consort pair. Archi, "Studies in the Pantheon of Ebla," *Or* 63, no. 3 (1994): 250. It has been suggested that the writings with the number 2 or reduplicated are an expression referring to a consort pair. See Marco Bonechi, "On Some Rarely Attested Ebla Gods," in Ana šulmāni: *Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Simonetta Graziani*, ed. Noemi Borrelli (Naples: UniorPress, 2022), 65–66.

34 For example, as attested in the Ebla archives, Hadda has seven local manifestations, Išḫara has ten, and Rašap has ten.

locales this deity is associated with, Saza and Binaš/Nenaš, are significant for royal ideology.[35] Some scholars have suggested that Saza (sa-za$_x^{ki}$) is the name for the palace complex in the Ebla texts.[36] Crown of Binaš/Nenaš (NE-*na-áš*^{ki}) also receives multiple offerings in a ceremony prior to the king and queen entering the royal mausoleum located there, indicating the importance of this deity for the mortuary cult of the royal family.[37] Thus, Crown/Two Crowns seems to be closely associated with the royal family and dynastic kingship: "Le double lien des Agu au coeur de la ville et au bâtiment religieux consacré au culte des ancêtres royaux indique sans aucun doute leur nature de divinités associées étroitment à la religion dynastique et à l'idéologie royale."[38]

Crown also occurs in theophoric position in a number of anthroponyms and two toponyms. The quantity of anthroponyms containing Crown is significant, indicating a "popularité remarquable."[39] In these names, Crown takes on roles commonly attributed to deities: it bestows, protects, and delivers from harm.[40] Interestingly, when it appears in personal names, it is always written in the singular, which may confirm this entity's conceptualization as "une divinité en même temps une et double,"[41] and consistently lacks the divine determinative, which may underscore this deity's status as an object, since other popular deities' names that appear as theophoric elements are frequently written with the divine determinative included.[42]

Of particular interest are anthroponyms that consist of a statement about Crown, describing this entity with qualities appropriate to or functioning in

35 Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 22–23.

36 Alfonso Archi, *Administrative Texts: Allotments of Clothing for the Palace Personnel* (*Archive L.2769*), ARET 20 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2018), 273. For a different view, see Marco Bonechi, review of *Administrative Texts: Allotments of Clothing for the Palace Personnel* (*Archive L.2769*), by Alfonso Archi, *JNES* 79, no. 2 (2020): 334–335, https://doi.org/10.1086/710112. Bonechi argues that it refers to territory in the countryside.

37 On the location of Binaš/Nenaš and the royal mausoleum(s), see Marco Ramazzotti, "'Where Were the Early Syrian Kings of Ebla Buried?' The Ur-Eridu Survey Neural Model as an Artificial Adaptive System for the Probabilistic Localization of the Ebla Royal Mausoleums," *Scienze dell'Antichità* 18 (2012): 20–24; Maria Giovanna Biga, "La città di 'Arugu e la geografia del culto del regno di Ebla (Siria, XXIV sec. a.C.)," *Isimu* 13 (2016): 105–115, https://doi.org/10.15366/isimu2011.13.006.

38 Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 23. As they note, *agû*(*m*) also appears as a deified object in Mesopotamian *tākultu* rituals.

39 Pomponio and Xella, 22.

40 Pomonio and Xella, 22.

41 Pomponio and Xella, 22.

42 See, for example, the anthroponyms with ^{d}*'à-da*, such as *a-bù-*^{d}*'à-da* (PET, 117) and *ib-du-*^{d}*'à-da* (ARES 1, 240). Not all personal names containing *'à-da* have the divine determinative, however; some omit it. See Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 51.

the role of a deity. For example, the personal name *puzur$_4$*(*-ra*)*-a-gú*, which belonged to several different individuals in the Ebla texts, attributes to it the divine role of safeguarding: "A (place of) refuge is Crown."[43] The personal name *en-na-a-gú*, which also belongs to several individuals, can be translated as the vocative expression, "Mercy—Crown!"[44] Both of these personal names attribute a protective capacity to Crown, implying that Crown was conceptualized by the name-givers as an agent capable of shielding or showing mercy to human beings, a common function of deities.[45] Another name, *ba-a-ga* "Come, Crown!" seems to attribute the ability for motion to Crown, another characteristics of agents.[46] Another personal name also attributes certain agential capacities to Crown, similar to those associated with anthroform gods: *kùn-a-gú* "Be true, Crown!"[47]

Interestingly, outside of personal names, Crown is usually written either preceded by the graphic designation for the number two (2 ^{d}*a-gú*, 2 ^{d}*a-gúm*), or reduplicated (^{d}*a-gú* ^{d}*a-gú*).[48] Crown appears in the singular when followed by a designation of place, and in the administrative text that records an offering for Crown and Guladu (ARET 7, 150 r. IV 7–v. I 2). Pomponio and Xella offer two interpretations for the writings with the numeral and reduplicated writings: "Il devait par conséquent s'agir d'un couple de dieux du même nom, ou bien d'une divinité conçue comme double."[49] Paolo Matthiae describes the sin-

43 Personal names consisting of *Puzur-DN* occur frequently in Pre-Sargonic, Old Akkadian, and Ur III names in Mesopotamia, as well as Ebla (see *CAD* P, s.v. "puzru," 558). For the occurrences of this name in the Ebla texts, see the references in Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 22.

44 *Enna-DN* occurs a number of times as a personal name with this meaning in Old Akkadian, Old Assyrian, and Old Babylonian (*CAD* E, s.v. "ennu," 170). For the occurrences of this name in the Ebla texts, see the references in Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 21.

45 Other attestations of personal names with Crown as a theophoric element include: *a-gú-lum*, *a-gú-šum*, *du-bí-a-gú*, *du-i-ni-rí-a-gú*, *gú-a-gú/ga*, *i-ti-a-gú*, *ib-du-a-gú*, *ib-dur-a-gú*, *ib-ga-a-gú*, KUM-*a-gú*, NE-*i-ti-a-gú*, and *su-ma-a-gú*. Pomponio and Xella suggest that "les NP ne fournissent aucun renseignement particulier sur sa nature (les attributions/actions sont assez génériques: il est entre autres 'dieu,' clément, il donne, protège, délivre, etc.)" (*Les dieux d'Ebla*, 22).

46 Alfonso Archi et al., *The Prosopography of Ebla*, B, 1, https://www.sagas.unifi.it/upload/sub/eblaweb/dbase_prosopografia/b.pdf.

47 Alfonso Archi et al., *The Prosopography of Ebla*, K, 17, https://www.sagas.unifi.it/upload/sub/eblaweb/dbase_prosopografia/k.pdf.

48 On the dual in Eblaite texts, see Pelio Fronzaroli, "Forms of the Dual in the Texts of Ebla," trans. Matthew L. Jaffe, *Maarav* 5–6 (1990): 111–125, https://doi.org/10.1086/MAR19905609; Jacopo Pasquali, "La duplicazione dei sostantivi come indicazione del duale nei testi di Ebla," *NABU* 2008.3:65–67, no. 49.

49 Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 22.

gular and the dual forms as "respectively the royal crown and the king's and queen's crowns paired."[50] Which interpretation seems most likely, given the evidence?

Two Crowns is not the only deity that appears with the number 2 or reduplicated in texts from Ebla, so it is instructive to look toward the other examples to see if they shed light on the meaning of this orthography. Numerous texts from Ebla give evidence of other deities whose names occur either preceded by the number 2 or written twice. Several names are habitually written in these ways; a few others only occur in these forms in isolated cases. Previously, scholars have suggested that some of the deities whose names occur as dual may have been considered to have a dual essence, or that such constructions refer to two deities with the same name. However, it may be the case that the spelling also sometimes reflects the fact that two objects or an object with two parts is being described.

For example, Baliḫ (ᵈ*ba-li-ḫa*), the deified affluent of the Euphrates, is usually (if not always) written with the number 2 (2 ᵈ*ba-li-ḫa*/ᵈ*ba-li-ḫa-a*).[51] This writing may reflect the fact that the river was perceived as an object with two physical parts: it has been suggested that the orthography reflects the "presence of an underground counterpart of the visible course,"[52] or the fact that the upper stretches of this river split into two.[53] This entity is clearly treated as a deity: in addition to appearing in several incantation texts, an offering record notes that Two Baliḫ receives a sheep, and Two Baliḫ is also recorded in another text as having cultic personnel.[54] It is notable that in the former text Two Baliḫ receives one ovine: this seems to indicate that though the name is habitually written with the number 2, this entity is evidently conceived of as sufficiently unified that the offering of a single animal is accept-

50 Matthiae, *Ebla*, 71.

51 See the references in Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 78–79. See also Fronzaroli, "Forms of the Dual in the Texts of Ebla," 115–116; and Christopher Woods, "On the Euphrates," ZA 95, no. 1–2 (2005): 13–14, https://doi.org/10.1515/zava.2005.95.1-2.7. Woods notes that "the deified Baliḫ—construed in the dual … was a full-fledged, if minor, deity of the local cult" at Ebla. He compares this with attestations of Baliḫ in the dual in a god list from Abu Salabikh and an Old Babylonian itinerary, as well as iconographic depictions of the Euphrates "as twin divinities" on seals from Mari, Susa, and Syro-Anatolia.

52 Matthiae, *Ebla*, 71.

53 See Archi, "Studies in the Pantheon of Ebla," 254.

54 ARET 5, 5 v. I 4–7; ARET 5, 4, 3:2; TM.75.G.2038 r. I 1–4; and TM.75.G.10186 II 2–4. ARET 5, 18 II 2–4 adjures Baliḫ to "approach (and) give birth/descend!" (ᵈ*Ba-li-ḫa gi-ra-ba wa-li-da*). These two verbal forms may be a rare attestation of a dual imperative form. See Fronzaroli, "Forms of the Dual in the Texts of Ebla," 122.

able. This would argue against the idea that two deities of the same name are being referenced. In this case, the writings with the number 2 probably reflect the fact that the actual river was perceived as a two-part object. Interestingly, Baliḫ is written with the number 2 in some texts from Emar as well.[55]

Several other gods occur in the Ebla texts written with the number 2 occasionally, but elsewhere in the singular. The moon-god occurs with the numeral 2 (2 ^{d}en.zu) as the recipient of an offering in an administrative text that also records an offering of gold for two statues of Ilam (^{d}*Ì-lam*; MEE 10, 27 v. I 7–II 4).[56] In addition, this deity occurs with the number 2 in a record of offerings of metal for daggers (MEE 10, 27 v. I 7–II 4 and TM.75.G.1738 v. III 3–8). Pomponio and Xella suggest that this writing could refer to two phases of the moon.[57] Alfonso Archi proposes that "the dual was suggested by the manner in which Suinu was represented and one thinks immediately of the crescent, the Moon-god's most frequent attribute." Further, he makes an interesting suggestion about what these writings with the number 2 may indicate about the way in which this entity was conceptualized: "Possibly in the cases in which we find 2 ^{d}en.zu the god was represented only as a crescent moon and not as an anthropomorphic figure."[58] Indeed, other texts from Ebla refer to the "two horns" of the moon. If this interpretation is correct, then the writings with the number 2 indicate that the deity was conceptualized as an object with two parts, in this case, the two horns of the crescent moon.

However, other similar writings are less easily explained, and do not necessarily imply an object with two parts. City, discussed further below, occurs mainly in the singular, but also once with the number 2 (2 ^{d}*á-lu*) in a record of the allotment of materials for the decoration of several different statues (TM.75.G.2508 v. VII 1′–11′). Perhaps this refers to the two-part layout of the city of Ebla, with its citadel and lower town. Aštar also occurs once reduplicated

55 The "Two Pair of Baliḫ of the Palace Garden" (2 *ta-pal* ^{d}KASKAL.KUR.RA^{meš} *ša* KIRI$_6$ É.GAL-*lì* KI.MIN) appear among the deities who receive offerings in a text concerning the *zukru* festival (Emar 373:141); Two Baliḫ also appears in Emar 378:20 (2 ^{d}*Ba-li-ḫé ša* KIRI$_6$.NUMUN *ša* LUGAL). In both these cases, the particular manifestation(s) mentioned is that of the palace or royal gardens. See Daniel E. Fleming, *Time at Emar: The Cultic Calendar and the Rituals from the Diviner's House*, MC 11 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 246–247, 255. Might these refer to the physical form of the river in the royal gardens, which was perhaps a stream with two branches? If so, this may suggest an interpretation for the Two Baliḫ of the two sanctuaries of Kura attested in an Eblaite document (TM.75.G.2075 r. V 24–27).

56 The *Vocabolario di Ebla* equates ^{d}en.zu = *zu-i-nu* (*VE* 799).

57 Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 273.

58 Archi, "Studies in the Pantheon of Ebla," 254.

(d*aš-dar*-d*aš*-d[*ar*]), in a record of a royal offering (TM.75.G.12717 r. VIII 13–17). In one administrative text, Two Išḫara (2 dBARA$_7$) receives two pieces of linen fabric (ARET 3, 334 III). The reasons behind these rare writings are not clear. These latter two cases could refer to two statues of the deity located in particular temples.

What might these examples indicate concerning the meaning of the writings with the number 2 or reduplication in the case of Two Crowns? Crown/Two Crowns is certainly associated with royal ideology in the texts from Ebla. As Pomponio and Xella suggest, "il semble possible d'émettre l'hypothèse selon laquelle Agu et les Agu seraient la couronne du roi (et de la reine), symbolisant de toute façon le pouvoir royal."[59] Thus, it seems likely that the dual writings may indicate either a pair of crowns or a double crown, perhaps the two crowns of the king and the queen, as Matthiae suggests. The term does occur written as dual occasionally in Akkadian texts referring to an object belonging to or worn by one individual: the exact meaning of these writings is unclear, but they may very well indicate some type of double crown.[60]

Thus, Crown/Two Crowns should be understood as an object or pair of objects designating royal rank (a crown, a double crown, or pair of crowns, or perhaps even a divine crown with two horns). Crown/Two Crowns is shown to be treated as a deity in texts from Ebla through the use of the divine determinative, records of offerings, and its function in anthroponyms. This deity (or these deities) apparently appreciates offerings, is characterized in personal names as a protective or merciful agent, and is associated particularly with the royal household and the royal ancestor cult.

Another interesting deity attested at Ebla is d*á-la*, d*á-a*, d*á-lu*^{ki}, or "City."[61] The Akkadian noun has this meaning, *ālu*(*m*) "city," and the same term also occurs in the Ebla texts as a common noun with the meaning "city."[62] City is treated as a deity in a number of texts, and also has several manifestations associated with different locales. City receives offerings, especially of wool, in a dozen adminis-

59 Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 22–23.

60 The *CAD* cites UCP 9 108 no. 53:3: "for the double(?) crown of Zababa" (*ša* AGA.AGA DN); and *ABL* 923:12: "on his head he (Sin) wore a double tiara" (2 AGA.MEŠ *ina qaqqadi*) (*CAD* A.1, s.v. "agû").

61 See Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 28–30.

62 *CAD* A.1, s.v. "ālu." The *CAD* notes a number of cases where the city acts as a legal person; however, the divine determinative is not attested in these cases (383–384). The common noun for city does not appear to be used as a deity name elsewhere in Akkadian texts (apart from personal names), though particular cities are often characterized as divine in texts from Mesopotamia. The most notable example of this is the city/god Aššur. See Lambert, "God Aššur," 82–86.

trative texts.[63] Specific offerings allocated for City include wool in the seventh and eighth months (ARET 3, 464 v. IV [seventh month], ARET 4, 11, 91 [eighth month]), a gold tray in the eleventh month (ARET 4, 17, 96 [eleventh month]), a gold strap and decorated belt (MEE 10, 26, v. VI 3′–4′), a dagger and sheath of gold (MEE 10, 27, r. VI′ 7–9), and silver for the decoration of statues' faces, hands, and feet (TM.75.G.2508 v. VII 1′–11′).[64] In two of these texts, City is given similar offerings to those recorded for a number of other gods.[65] Several offerings to City are specified as being from the king (TM.75.G.2508 v. VII 1′–11′ and MEE 7, 23 v. V 1–VI 3.). City of Arab (d*á-la a-ra-ab*ki) occurs twice in an administrative text (TM.75.G.2464 v. XIV 10; XVII 32), City of Gušebu is mentioned in three administrative texts (d*á-la gú-šè-bù*ki),[66] and City of Zig (d*á-la* lú *zi-ig/gú*ki) is mentioned numerous times as the recipient of offerings ranging from wool to silver in administrative texts.[67] City of Gušebu seems to receive a seat in one text (TM.75.G.1923 v. XI 1′–4′).

City (d*á-la*, d*á-a*, d*á-lu*ki) does not occur as a theophoric element in any known anthroponyms from Ebla. However, several related terms for city or walls, including uruki and bàdki, do occur as theophoric elements in personal names in the Ebla texts, such as *šum*-uruki "Name is City," *ì-lum*-bàd(ki) "God is Wall/Fortress," and BAD-*du-lum* "Fortress is lord."[68] The name *kùn*-uruki "Be

63 On wool at Ebla, see Maria Giovanna Biga, "La lana nei testi degli Archivi Reali di Ebla (Siria, XXIV sec. a.C.): Alcune osservazioni," in *Studi italiani di metrologia ed economia del vicino oriente antico, dedicati a Nicola Parise in occasione del Suo settantesimo compleanno*, ed. Enrico Ascalone and Luca Peyronel, Studia Asiana 7 (Rome: Herder, 2011), 77–92.

64 The silver is allocated for the decoration of four statues, gifts from the king to Two Cities and Ada of Lub. Since there are only three gods named, the statues are thus probably of the king, to be stationed in the temples of these gods. A similar text records a comparable gift for the decoration of statues as gifts from the king to Two Cities of Zig and NIdabal of Arugadu (TM.75.G.2507 v. VIII 10–22).

65 Pomponio and Xella note that in MEE 10, 26, Aštabil, Ammarik, Crown, the Lord of Ganana, Adara, and Gamis receive similar offerings; in MEE 10, 27 Crown receives offerings along with the Lord of Ganana, Adara, Aštabil, Ammarik, Nidabal of Luban, Rašap of Siam, and Nidabal of Larugadu (*Les dieux d'Ebla*, 28n9).

66 TM.75.G.1923 v. XI 1′–4′; TM.75.G.2465 v. XII 10; TM.75.G.10201 v. XV 10.

67 ARET 3, 798 v. III; MEE 7, 23 v. V. 1–VI 3; TM.75.G.1904 r. IV 14; TM.75.G.2507 v.VIII 10–22; TM.75.G.10074 r IV 14 v. V 26. XIII 9; TM.75.G.10201 r. IV 30.

68 For these and other examples of personal names in the Ebla texts with these elements, see Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 361, 510. According to the *CAD*, *ālu* also occurs in Akkadian names from Mesopotamia as a theophoric element. For examples, see Johann Jakob Stamm, *Die akkadische Namengebung*, MVAG 44 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1939), 83, 90–91; and I.J. Gelb, *Glossary of Old Akkadian*, MAD 3 (Chicago: Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 3–4 (cited in *CAD* A.1, s.v. "ālu."). For BAD-*du-lum*, see Archi et al., *The Prosopography of Ebla*, B, 21.

true, City!" implores City to act in a certain way.[69] Pomponio and Xella describe bàd^{ki} as "une épithète divine … qui fait allusion à l'action d'être ou de protéger comme un 'mur' ou comme une 'forteresse.'"[70] Moreover, several persons whose names are attested at Ebla have Ḫalab (Aleppo) as a theophoric element, such as *ig-rí-iš-ḫa-lab*$_x$! "Ḫalab has driven away" and *puzur*$_4$*-ra-ḫa-lab*$_x$ "A (place of) refuge is Ḫalab."[71] Moreover, an individual from Mari named UR-*ḫa-lab*$_x^{ki}$ "Man of Ḫalab" is attested in an Eblaite text (TM.75.G.10074).[72] The presence of the determinative for locations in several of these examples is remarkable, and emphasizes that these were classified as places, rather than anthroform beings, though they appear as theophoric elements. Yet, in the names they function as agents.

In the administrative texts in which this entity receives offerings, City is written with the divine determinative. City and City of Zig also occasionally occur written with the number 2, though the meaning of the dual writing is unclear (TM.75.G.2508 v. VII 1′–11′; TM.75.G.2507 v. VIII 10–22).[73] In addition, the designation for this entity may be written with both the determinative for divinity and the determinative for a location.[74] In their brief discussion of this deity, Pomponio and Xella suggest, "Il semble s'agir de la 'ville' divinisée," though they also argue that the identification of the city with the specific city of Zig, which has sometimes been proposed, is problematic.[75] It does indeed seem difficult to

69 Archi et al., *The Prosopography of Ebla*, K, 23.

70 Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 361.

71 Alfonso Archi, "Hadda of Ḫalab and His Temple in the Ebla Period," *Iraq* 72 (2010): 14–15, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021088900000565.

72 However, note that Archi argues that "Ḫalab was used in the onomasticon as a circumlocution for the god of the town" ("Hadda of Ḫalab and His Temple in the Ebla Period," 5).

73 Archi suggests that "Two Cities" refers to the locations Alu and Dabinatu ("Studies in the Ebla Pantheon II," 422n34). Perhaps the dual form could also refer to an upper and lower town? See the discussion above.

74 See, for example, MEE 10, 3 v. XI 1–4: ^{d}*á-lu*$^{\langle\langle ki\rangle\rangle}$, though the determinative for a location is partially reconstructed here. See also the examples where the city name is specified, which all have the determinative for location.

75 Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 30. Archi also points out that Alu is a geographical name, along with Dabinatu (^{d}*da-bí-na-du*), which appears in a few texts alongside it (e.g., TM.75.G.2239 rev. V 7–VI 18; "Studies in the Ebla Pantheon II," 421–423). Interestingly, Baradu madu "Great Cold" also appears in the same text. He argues that these were "two small settlements in the area where the family of the vizier Ibrium had its land," suggesting that the villages arose around temples to these two deities. He suggests that these deities were depicted in human form, citing TM.75.G.2508 rev. VII 15–25, which mentions a quantity of gold for plating the face, hands, and feet of four statues. However, it may be the case that the statues were of the king, rather than the deities, since the text mentions four statues, but only lists three deities (Two Cities and Hadda).

argue for the identification of this entity with Zig alone, in light of the attestations of City of Arab and City of Gušebu, as well as City of Zig. Clearly, City is characterized as a deity in these texts, receiving offerings of textiles, precious metals, statues (probably of the king), and other objects.

Divine names with the form dingir + GN could be interpreted as deified cities if dingir is read as a determinative in these constructions as well (e.g., reading ^{d}DU-*lum*^{ki} instead of dingir DU-*lum*^{ki} and ^{d}*ib-la*^{ki} for dingir *ib-la*^{ki}).[76] However, the presence at Ebla of many forms consisting of ^{d}*be* + GN ("Lord of GN") may suggest that these entities could be considered to be anthroform lords (or ladies) of the cities (imagined in humanlike form), rather than deified cities. Compare, for example, ^{d}*be du-du-lu/la-a*^{ki} ("Lord of Tuttul") and dingir-*du-du-lu*^{ki} ("God of Tuttul").[77] On the other hand, the examples discussed above make it clear that specific cities could be treated as deities. Offerings are also attested for Saza (sa-za$_x^{ki}$), the site of the palace complex, which specify its classification as a location using the appropriate determinative.[78] In addition, Archi suggests that Adar(w)anu (^{d}*a-dar-a-an/nu*) is a "rural settlement" named after a nearby mountain. It appears in ARET 5.16, an incantation that also mentions Two Baliḫ and Ammarik (^{d}*ʾà-ma-ri-ig*), where it is called the "lord of the eagles" (*be* ti$_8^{mušen}$.ti$_8^{mušen}$). Following Volkert Haas's identification of Ammarik as Jebel Semān, another nearby mountain, Archi concludes that Adar(w)an was also originally a mountain, which lent its name to a nearby settlement.[79]

Another intriguing entity, dingir-ká, is found in a single administrative text as the recipient of silver. This entity is rendered by Pomponio and Xella as "Dieu de la 'Porte'": the god who presides over one of the gates of Ebla.[80] However,

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76 See Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 138.

77 See Pomponio and Xella, 102. Ebla and DUlum do not occur in alternate forms with ^{d}*be*. It may be possible that some cities were characterized as gods, while others had a human-form god or goddess as their "lord" or "lady." Forms of the type ^{d}*be* + GN are much more commonly attested. ^{d}DU-*lum*^{ki} (or dingir DU-*lum*^{ki}) and ^{d}*ib-la*^{ki} (or dingir *ib-la*^{ki}) are offered gifts in only one text each (TM.75.G.10153 r. V 12–VI 4 and MEE 10, 23 v. II 13–II 4); ^{d}*du-du-lu*^{ki} (or dingir-*du-du-lu*^{ki}) is attested in three records of offerings, while ^{d}*be du-du-lu/la-a*^{ki} is attested in thirty-one texts. Pomponio and Xella suggest that the latter is an epithet of Dagan (106).

78 MEE 10, 29 v. XVI 3–19: Saza is the last in a list of deities here. See also TM.75.G.1464 v. IV 1–8, where Saza is the intended recipient of eight *gàr-su*, alongside Hadda, who is to receive ten *gàr-su*.

79 Archi, "Studies in the Ebla Pantheon II," 424–425. Contra Pelio Fronzaroli, who argues that ^{d}*a-dar-wa-an* is best understood as an epithet, "He with the penetrating gaze," used to describe Hadda. Fronzaroli, "The Hail Incantation (ARET 5, 4)," in *Festschrift für Burkhart Kienast zu seinem 70 Geburtstage dargebracht von Freunden, Schülern und Kollegen*, ed. Gebhard J. Selz, AOAT 274 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2003), 89–107.

80 Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 157.

an alternate reading may also be possible: the writing dingir-ká may indicate instead that the gate itself is labeled here as a deity (dká, reading dingir as the divine determinative).[81] Gate also appears as a theophoric element in personal names, such as *gi*-ká "Exultation of the Gate."[82] Of course, it is possible that this entity is similar to the guardians of the gate commonly depicted in texts and art in the Akkadian period in Mesopotamia, which are usually described as anthropoid twins.[83] Unfortunately, the dearth of texts referencing this entity do not provide much information concerning its nature, other than implying that it would respond favorably to a gift of silver.

In addition, several objects belonging to some of the most prominent gods attested in the Ebla texts receive offerings themselves. These objects are not marked with the divine determinative and are therefore not listed in Pomponio and Xella's catalog. Yet, they appear to receive cultic attention. For example, several possessions of the storm-god Hadda receive offerings in administrative texts. Hadda is considered to be one of the most important gods in Ebla based on the quantity of attestations in the texts, the richness of the offerings made to him, the mention of his temple, his seven local manifestations, his association with other major gods, and the frequency with which this god's name occurs as a theophoric element in personal names.[84] His richly decorated statues were overlaid with sheets of silver and gold on the face, hands, and feet.[85] Two texts also mention a month designated the "month of the sacrificial offering of Hadda" (iti nídba d'*à-da*; TM.75.G.222 v. II 1 and TM.75.G.268 v. III 3).

Several texts record precious metals allotted for the "Double-Axe/Mace of Hadda" (*ḫa-bù* d'*à-da*): the Double-Axe receives silver in one text (MEE 10, 23 v. II 10–12), and gold in another (MEE 2, 12 r. VI 11–13). Double-axes and their

81 ARET 7, 88 r. I 1–II 1, contra Pomponio and Xella, who read it in the former way.

82 Alfonso Archi et al., *The Prosopography of Ebla*, G, 29, https://www.sagas.unifi.it/upload/sub/eblaweb/dbase_prosopografia/g.pdf.

83 See E. Douglas Van Buren, "The Guardians of the Gate in the Akkadian Period," *Or* 16, no. 3 (1947): 312–332. Van Buren concludes that the pairs of gods designated or portrayed as guardians of gates were originally conceptualized as offspring or squires of Anu. These guardians are usually depicted on either side of a particular gate, in human form, either naked or wearing various types of clothing. However, he notes that some Akkadian cylinder seals instead depict a winged gate, with no accompanying figures to guard it. Perhaps in these cases the gate itself is characterized as the guardian god.

84 On Hadda, see Daniel Schwemer, *Die Wettergottgestalten Mesopotamiens und Nordsyriens im Zeitalter der Keilschriftkulturen*, 93–128; Archi, "Hadda of Ḫalab and His Temple in the Ebla Period," 3–17; and Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux*, 52–53, who remark, "Ada était sans aucun doute un des dieux les plus importants d'Ebla, vraisemblablement du même rang que Kura … et, peut-être, supérieur à NIdabal."

85 Archi, "Hadda of Ḫalab and His Temple in the Ebla Period," 10–11.

handles are mentioned frequently in texts that record offerings for Hadda, and this weapon is closely associated with the god.[86] This weapon was plated with sheets of silver and gold, similarly to the hands, feet, and faces of the statues of deities.[87] However, this noun is not written with the divine determinative, as most deity's proper names are, and the metals it receives could simply be intended for its decoration. On the other hand, perhaps these texts showcase the Double-Axe receiving treatment appropriate to a deity in the form of offerings of precious metals.[88] When metal is given for the purpose of plating an object, it is often specified that it is for a decorative overlay ($šir_x$-za); in the two texts referenced above, this term is absent (though admittedly it may be implied). However, even if the metal is used for plating, it may indicate the divinity of this object: as Beate Pongratz-Leisten and Karen Sonik point out, "If the inherently pure status of specific materials [such as gold and silver] was a precondition for their use in divine statues or images, the materials themselves simultaneously *produced* (or, at least, contributed to producing) the potent agency of the things for which they were used through this selfsame inherent purity." They add that "the choice of a particular exotic wood for the body of a divine statue, as well as the coating of its face and hands with gold or silver and the inlay of semi-precious stones for its eyes, enabled the animation of the statue or cult image … by not only signaling or reflecting but also (to some degree) establishing or creating its authoritative status or fitness to *pres-*

86 As Pomponio and Xella state, "Parmi les très nombreuses offrandes qui lui sont présentées, la hache 'bipenne' (*ḫa-bù*, ŠITAx10+GIŠ), sans aucun doute une des armes qui caractérisait particulièrement cette figure divine et qui rentre traditionnellement dans l'iconographie d'Haddu/Hadas aux époques postériures, semble jouer un rôle particulier. Par ailleurs, le dieu reçoit maintes fois d'autres armes comme des javelots, des poignards, des massues … qui parlent toutes nettement en faveur de sa nature belliqueuse" (*Les dieux d'Ebla*, 53). Another object, or pair of objects, that appears frequently associated with Hadda are cattle horns (si gu_4).

87 According to Archi, the head of the axe/mace was decorated with 117 g of silver and its handle with 47 g of gold ("Hadda of Ḫalab and His Temple in the Ebla Period," 6). On the textual evidence from Ebla on the decoration of cult statues, see Archi, "The Head of Kura—The Head of Hadabal," *JNES* 64 (2005): 81–100, https://doi.org/10.1086/431684.

88 Schwemer notes that A. 1858 (edited as FM 7, 5), reports the receipt of the "weapons of Addu of Halab" as battle aids for Zimrī-Līm (*Die Wettergottgestalten Mesopotamiens und Nordsyriens im Zeitalter der Keilschriftkulturen*, 215–217). He also notes a text from Alalakh that references the weapons of the storm-god in a similar military context. Schwemer argues that such evidence suggests that, "The arms of the victorious warrior, Addu, were worshipped as movable cult symbols and could be taken into battle as a kind of field-standard." Schwemer, "The Storm-gods of the Ancient Near East: Summary, Synthesis, Recent Studies," *JANER* 7, no. 2 (2008): 164, https://doi.org/10.1163/156921207783876404.

ence the divine."[89] "Two Axes/Maces" (probably belonging to Hadda) are also invoked alongside the Two Baliḫ in an incantation for an exorcism prior to the dressing of a cult statue of Hadda, where they strike the enemy; however, since they do not receive the divine determinative, they may simply be the tools used by Two Baliḫ to smite malevolent forces.[90] Yet, it is interesting to note that a much later relief from the temple of the Storm-god of Aleppo in the tenth century BCE portrays the god riding in a chariot and carrying a mace, with another mace floating above his other arm that has the Luwian hieroglyph for "deity" directly above it.[91]

A handful of other objects, including various weapons and cattle horns, also appear frequently as offerings for Hadda. However, when these objects have metal earmarked for them, the texts make it clear that it is for decoration of the objects, and usually also explicitly state that the objects themselves are to be gifts for Hadda. The only other object associated with Hadda that may receive an offering itself according to the available texts is the Stela of Hadda. One text records silver designated for "a tray/plate (for) the Stela of Hadda" (GIŠ-asar na-rú ^{d}*à-da*).[92] Most of the other references to stelae at Ebla refer to the stelae of kings or other high-ranking officials; these also receive offerings.[93]

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89 Pongratz-Leisten and Sonik, "Between Cognition and Culture," 11–12 (emphasis original). Benzel discusses how gold and silver serve to animate objects or activate their ritual efficacy in Mesopotamia ("What Goes In Is What Comes Out," 89–118). It is possible that deities' weapons, similar to their jewelry, were "empowered and decommissioned in much the same manner as the divine statues themselves" (92). See also Irene J. Winter, "Gold! Divine Light and Lustre in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, London, 12–16 April 2010, the British Museum and UCL, London*, vol. 2: *Ancient and Modern Issues in Cultural Heritage: Colour and Light in Architecture, Art, and Material Culture; Islamic Archaeology*, ed. Roger Matthews and John Curtis (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012), 153–172; and Victor Hurowitz, "What Goes In Is What Comes Out: Materials for Creating Cult Statues," in Beckman and Lewis, *Text, Artifact, and Image*, 3–23.

90 TM.75.G.2303 I 1–3: šu-ra 2 ^{d}*Ba-li-ḫa* 2 GIŠ-šilig$_5$-*sù* lú da maš-maš. See Pelio Fronzaroli, "L'incantation des deux haches (TM.75.G.2303)," in *Mélanges offerts à David Cohen: Études sur les langues, les dialects, les littératures*, ed. Jérôme Lentin and Antoine Lonnet (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose: 2003), 223–233. Fronzaroli interprets the axes as the tools used by the Two Baliḫ.

91 See Archi, "Ritualization at Ebla," 218–219 and fig. 3.

92 ARET 3, 440 v. IX 1–4, following the transliteration in Archi, "Hadda of Ḫalab and His Temple in the Ebla Period," 11. Note that a "stela of the king" (*maš-ar-tum* en) also receives plates/trays in TM.75.G.10210 obv. XIV 23–XV 8, as noted by Archi, "The Stele (na-rú) in the Ebla Documents," in *Written on Clay and Stone: Ancient Eastern Studies Presented to Krystyna Szarzyńska on the Occasion of Her 80th Birthday*, ed. Jan Braun et al. (Warsaw: AGADE, 1998), 17.

93 Archi, "Stele (na-rú) in the Ebla Documents," 16–19. There are also a number of references

Finally, the Temple of Hadda also appears to receive offerings in a number of records. For example, the "Temple of Hadda" (é ^{d}*à-da*) receives two bulls, according to one text (MEE 10, 27 r. X′ 1–4; see also TM.75.G.314 r. I 1–v. II 2). It is possible that this could be a way of expressing a total quantity of goods intended for distribution within the temple, which certainly contained the cult statues of multiple other deities, in addition to Hadda.[94] However, given the fact that temples themselves receive cultic devotion in Mesopotamia, one wonders whether that might also be the case at Ebla. It has already been demonstrated that places, both in the natural environment and the built one, could receive offerings.

In the administrative tablets from Ebla, a few other possessions belonging to important gods and goddesses also appear to receive offerings. An object belonging to Išḫara receives an offering in one such text. Išḫara is the most important goddess in Ebla, as demonstrated by her multiple local manifestations, prominence in ritual texts, and veneration in the temple of the major Eblaite god Kura.[95] She also plays a central role in the marriage ceremonies of the kings of Ebla. In a text from Archive L. 2769, the "Chair of Išḫara of the king in the temple of Kura" (tuš ⟨^{d}⟩ LAGABxSIG$_7$ en é ^{d}*ku-ra*) receives a measure of wool during the second month (MEE 2, 33 v. IX 14–19). The noun designating this object is not written with the divine determinative, does not occur as a theophoric element in personal names, and is not characterized as a deity in any other texts. In fact, the chair of Išḫara does not seem to be mentioned in any other texts at all. It appears to be the only object associated with this goddess that is offered a gift.

Objects belonging to Rašap are also themselves occasionally the recipients of offerings. Rašap is another major god in the Eblaite pantheon, attested in abundant documents and appearing in many local manifestations.[96] The texts recording offerings to Rašap include a wide variety of gifts from a number of high-ranking individuals in different circumstances, and their complexity may indicate that "la vénération pour ce dieu était plus complexe et avait des formes plus articulées que dans le cas des autres divinités."[97] One particularly intrigu-

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to the "day of the festival of the stela" belonging to various individuals. The term na-rú is equated with /sikkanātim/ (written zi-ga-na-tim) in the Ebla Vocabulary (VE 166a). See the discussion of *sikkānu*-stones at Emar in ch. 5.

94 See TM.75.G.2429 v. VI 3–10, which describes a gift of silver for the decoration of the statue of Ḫa'aba that is in the temple of Hadda: ^{d}*ḫa-a-'à-ba* lú é ^{d}*à-da*.

95 Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 214–217. As they summarize, it seems clear that "Išḫara était une des déesses les plus important dans l'Ebla du IIIe millénaire."

96 Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 314.

97 Pomponio and Xella, 315.

ing text is TM.75.G.1764, which records offerings to one of the primary local manifestations of Rašap during the third month, the "month of Iṣḫara": Rašap of Adani.[98] According to a portion of this text, a certain individual collects an offering of two sheep for another deity and Rašap of Adani, two sheep for Rašap of Adani, but also two sheep for the "Knife" (gír-šum) of Rašap of Adani, while a second individual collects a sheep for the "food for the Javelin(?)" (šuku giš-gu-kak-gíd) of Rašap of Adani.[99] In another column of the same text, one sheep is designated for the "Lance(?)" (giš-ru) of Rašap of Adani.[100] Similarly, in a different text, the "Scabbard" (*a-ba-šum*) of Rašap of Adani and the "Scabbard" of Rašap of Saza each receive two sheep alongside other allotments of varying amounts of sheep for Rašap of Adani during the third month.[101]

The simplest way of interpreting this last group of texts is to argue that the objects themselves were, at least in these instances in these texts, the intended recipients of the offerings. The most informative texts concerning this phenomenon may be the ones concerning the objects belonging to Rašap. In several of the texts in which objects belonging to Rašap receive offerings, these offerings are recorded alongside offerings to Rašap himself, or one of his local manifestations. The juxtaposition is suggestive: It would seem to imply some independence between the objects and the possessing god. Why bother listing out offerings to Rašap's weapons if Rašap himself is the intended recipient? In other words, the inclusion of both Rašap of Adani and these objects, each receiving their own offerings, may indicate that the objects are characterized as distinct agents, capable of appreciating and potentially responding to offerings, alongside Rašap himself in these texts.

It is of course possible that the offerings in each case were intended to be used in the construction of or as the purchase price of these objects, which were then intended as offerings ultimately destined for the god. If this is the case, however, then these statements are abbreviated, since they do not state this directly, while many other texts from Ebla specify when an object is given as a purchase-price. It is also difficult to see how some of these offerings could have been used in the various objects' construction or decoration. One does not make a weapon out of a sheep.

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98 Pomponio and Xella, 314: "L'on rencontre le dieu localisé surtout à Adani … et à Duneb (Tunip), qui étaient vraisemblablement les deux centres principaux de son culte."

99 r. VIII 29–IX 27: 2 udu ^{d}[ ] ^{d}*ra-sa-ap 'à-da-ni*^{ki} 2 udu ^{d}*ra-sa-ap 'à-da-ni*^{ki} *ré-ì-ma-lik* šu-du$_8$ 2 udu gír-šum *wa* šuku ^{d}*ra-sa-ap 'à-da-ni*^{ki} *ré-ì-ma-lik* šu-du$_8$ 1 udu šuku giš-gu-kak-gíd ^{d}*ra-sa-ap 'à-da-ni*^{ki} *ip-dur-íš-lu* šu-du$_8$.

100 TM.75.G.1764 r. XI 3–7: 1 udu TE+KAL giš-ru ^{d}*ra-sa-ap 'à-da-ni*^{ki}.

101 TM.75.G.2238 r. XII 4–16: 2 udu *a-ba-šum* ^{d}*ra-sa-ap 'à-da-ni*^{ki} *wa* šuku-*sù* 2 udu *a-ba-šum* ^{d}*ra-sa-ap* sa-za$_x^{ki}$ *wa* šuku-*sù*.

As mentioned above, texts that make it evident that the offering is designated for use in the construction, decoration, or purchase of a particular object, often state this explicitly. For example, MEE 2, 48 v. V 5–9 records an amount of silver specifically for the "manufacture" of double-axes as gifts for Hadda (ša-pi 5 gín-dilmun kù-bar$_6$ kin$_x$-aka 3 *ḫa-bù* nì-ba ^{d}*ʾà-da*). The text MEE 7, 34 v. XVI 1–3 specifies that an offering is for the "decorative overlay" of a dagger as a gift for Rašap (šir$_x$-za 1 gír-mar-tu nì-ba ^{d}*ra-sa-ap*).[102] Other texts note that a monetary offering is the purchase-price or value of an object that is to be offered.[103] On the other hand, none of these objects receives the divine determinative. In short, one can only speculate about the ontological status attributed to these objects at Ebla, since the texts do not make that clear. Yet, given the fact that similar weapons appear to be deified elsewhere in the ancient Near East, it is a distinct possibility that these weapons were treated similarly at Ebla.[104]

The place of qualities and attributes in the Eblaite pantheon is another interesting issue. Are names associated with qualities best interpreted as deified qualities or as descriptive epithets used in lieu of anthroform deities' proper names? Pomponio and Xella generally lean toward the latter. Unfortunately, in most cases either assertion falls into the realm of speculation. For example, the name Adara "Powerful" (^{d}*ʾa$_5$-da-ra*, ^{d}*ʾa$_5$-da-la*), related to the root *ʾdr "to be powerful," could be an alternate designation for another god (i.e., an epithet and not a proper name);[105] or it could be the name of a deity that may or may not be a deified quality or a god conceptualized as humanlike in form.[106] Interestingly, this deity receives a dagger alongside Crown(s) in one text, which may give a clue about its association with royal or divine power. The same possibilities hold true for Baradu madu "Great Cold" (^{d}*ba-ra-du ma-du/ma-ad*), Gabadu "Venerable" (^{d}*ga-ba-du*), and Ilam "Eternal" (^{d}*ì-lam*).[107] Adara, Baradu madu,

102 On šir$_x$-za, see Hartmut Waetzoldt, "Zur Bewaffnung des Heeres von Ebla," *OrAnt* 29 (1990): 5, 11. He defines it as "Feinblech, Metallfolie."

103 See TM.75.G.2428 r. XVI 30–42.

104 For examples, see chs. 2, 4, and 5.

105 Attested in texts such as ARET 4, 17, 99, where it is one of the recipients of a dagger, alongside the Crown(s) of Saza (^{d}*a-gúm* sa-za$_x^{ki}$); MEE 10, 26 v. VI 7′–8′, where it receives a belt or sash; and TM.75.G.1464 v. X 31–XI 6, where it receives silver for a plaque.

106 Pomponio and Xella discuss the possibility of a connection with Adarwan as purely hypothetical (*Les dieux d'Ebla*, 55).

107 Xella suggests that Baradu madu is "a personification of the hail … a minor deity of the local pantheon or a specific manifestation of the Storm-God" ("Barad," *DDD*, 160–161). This interpretation is supported by an attestation of na$_4$ *ba-ra-du* "freezing hail" in an incantation invoking the storm-god (ARET 5, 4 rev. II 3–5). Barad, a cognate word, also appears in Ps. 78:48 and Isa 28:2, where it seems to be associated with hail. See also Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 80–82. Others have suggested that Baradu madu is the Euphrates

and Gabadu are infrequently attested, though they each receive offerings in a few texts; Ilam occurs as a recipient of offerings more frequently, and also figures in a few personal names. The texts, which merely contain records of the offerings they receive, do not indicate whether these names associated with divine qualities are epithets of gods, humanlike gods with names etymologically related to qualities, or deifications of the qualities themselves.

The main argument in favor of interpreting these as divine proper names, rather than epithets of other gods, is that no textual evidence from Ebla explicitly uses them as alternative designations of other gods. In the absence of evidence supporting the interpretation of such names as epithets of other gods, it is certainly possible that these were independent deities. However, if they were thought of by the writers of these texts as epithets of other gods, then they may have been used in this way commonly enough, whether orally or in other texts that have not survived, for the writers and potential readers to recognize the intended referent, with no explanation required. In addition, other information may suggest that divine names associated with qualities, such as Ilam, are indeed epithets: for example, Ilam is only attested in a few texts, which might suggest a lack of importance; however, one of these texts refers to silver designated for the temple of Ilam (é ^{d}*ì-lam*; TM.75.G.1556 v. III 10–IV 1). This, along with the large offerings of livestock and precious metals designated for this entity, may suggest that Ilam is an epithet for a more important god that would be more likely to have a temple and to receive large offerings than one that is mentioned so infrequently.[108] Adara "Power," Gabadu "Venerable," and

River; Pomponio and Xella point out that this is unlikely. Archi suggests that Baradu madu is the (female) consort of Ašdabil, based on TM.75.G.2239 rev. V 7–VI 18; TM.75.G.2428 obv. XXIII 24–36; and TM.75.G.2051 rev. II 1–IV 1. He suggests that the first part of the name is derived from *brd "cold," and the second from *m'd "plentiful, abundant," and that this deity should be identified as a river in Ebla's vicinity. He compares this deity with two additional, rarely attested deities at Ebla: Ana Madu "Plentiful Spring" (^{d}*a-na ma-du*) and Ida madu "Generous Hands" (^{d}*i-da ma-du*) ("Studies in the Ebla Pantheon II," 414–421). Mander evaluates these proposals, himself siding with the hypothesis that this is another name for the Euphrates, here deified (*La religione di Ebla*, 53–54). For Gabadu, see TM.75.G.2238 obv. VIII 22–25. See also Archi, "Studies in the Pantheon of Ebla," 250n3; Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 174; Francesco Pomponio, "I nomi divini nei testi di Ebla," *UF* 15 (1983): 145 and n. 18. Giovanni Pettinato asserts that Baradu madu is an epithet of the goddess Ḫebat. Pettinato, "Culto ufficiale ad Ebla durante il regno di Ibbi-Sipiš," *OrAnt* 18 (1979): 105. Pomponio and Xella suggest that Ilam is an epithet of Kura or Nidabal, though they also note that the texts themselves do not offer any clues as to the identification of this god (*Les dieux d'Ebla*, 196–197).

108 Ilam receives gold for statues (MEE 10, 27 v. I 7–II 4), and a large sacrifice of twenty-two ovines from the king on a designated day in the month of Isḫara (TM.75.G.2238 v. X 24–

Baradu madu "Great Cold," on the other hand, each receive the smaller offerings one would expect for minor gods, which may indicate that they are not epithets of more important gods, but perhaps are best understood as qualities characterized as (minor) deities.

A number of additional objects, qualities, and attributes occur functioning in roles appropriate for deities in personal names attested in the texts from Ebla.[109] As discussed in chapter 1, ancient Near Eastern personal names can be a useful source for the study of deities, since they often contain deities' names as theophoric elements and make brief statements about them. The anthroponyms from the texts found at Ebla include local Semitic names, more common Semitic names also attested elsewhere (such as Mari and Kish), and possibly even a handful of Hurrian names.[110] The most common type of names are theophoric: either those that form a short sentence, with a theophoric element and a nominal or verbal predicate, or those that take the form of a genitive construction, "X of DN."[111]

The deities attested in the onomastica of the ancient Near East are also often quite different from those attested in documents pertaining to the rituals of the official cult.[112] Indeed, the theophoric elements found most frequently in personal names at Ebla differ significantly from those that receive the most offerings in the offering lists and administrative texts. For example, though deities such as Kura, Hadda, Adabal, Rašap, and Išḫara are more prominent in juridical documents, offering lists, and administrative texts, the most common theophoric elements in the anthroponyms are not the names of these deities,

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29). See also Pomponio and Xella's suggestion: "Ce terme … doit par conséquent désigner un dieu d'importance non négligeable (compte tenu aussi des offrandes qu'il reçoit et du rang des dédicants), peut-être aussi Kura lui-même ou NIdabal" (*Les dieux d'Ebla*, 196–197). They also point to an Ugaritic epithet, *mlk ʿlm*, which may be an epithet of Baʿlu. The cognate Hebrew and Ugaritic terms also serve as epithets of YHWH/El in Gen 21:33 and Shapash in KTU 2.42:7. The author thanks Aren M. Wilson-Wright for these references.

109 On the personal names in texts from Ebla, see the inventory and analysis in Manfred Krebernik, *Die Personennamen der Ebla-Texte: Eine Zwischenbilanz*, BBVO 7 (Berlin: Reimer, 1988); and Joseph Martin Pagan, *A Morphological and Lexical Study of Personal Names in the Ebla Texts*, ARES 3 (Rome: Missione archeologica Italiana in Siria, 1998).

110 Rubio, "Eblaite, Akkadian and Proto-Semitic," 120. Rubio also notes that the personal names occasionally include West Semitic elements (such as *naʿim* "is good" in *a-bù-na-im*).

111 Giorgio Buccellati, "Eblaite and Amorite Names," in *Namensforschung/Name Studies/Les noms propres: Ein internationals Handbuch zur Onomastik/An International Handbook of Onomastics/Manuel international d'onomastiques*, ed. Ernst Eichler et al., 3 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), 1:857–858.

112 See Pardee, "Evaluation of the Proper Names from Ebla from a West Semitic Perspective," 119–151.

but rather more abstract concepts: *-da-mu* "Blood(-ties)" appears in 146 names, *-ma-lik* "King/Ruler" in 94 names, *-il* "God" in 71 names, *-li-im* "Clan" in 32 names, and *-da-ar*/*-dar* "Durability, Generation" in 32 names.[113]

The presence of deities' names in numerous anthroponyms can provide information about a deity's popularity.[114] Yet, when the theophoric element is an abstract concept, place, or object it is difficult to know whether it is understood as a deity's proper name or merely an epithet, especially in cases where the element does not occur elsewhere labeled or treated as a deity. Thus, though certain objects, qualities, and attributes occur in theophoric position in anthroponyms from Ebla, it is often hard to say for certain whether these names should be interpreted as deified objects, qualities, or attributes, or as epithets of other gods, or even as common nouns simply signifying objects or concepts of importance in the lives of the name-givers. What is clear is that the names treat these entities as agents capable of affecting the lives of human beings.

"Crown," discussed above, is the only object that occurs in theophoric position in numerous personal names that is also treated as a deity in other contexts. However, though "City," also discussed above, does not occur in personal names, several other terms for cities are attested, including uru^{ki} "City" and bàd^{ki} "Wall/Fortress," and a number of anthroponyms contain the names of specific towns or settlements in theophoric position.[115] For example, the personal name *ì-lum*-bàd^{ki} "God is Wall" seems to indicate that this architectural feature was deified. Ḫalab (Aleppo; *ḫa-lab*$_x$) occurs in about a dozen personal names in the Ebla documents, such as *en-ar/àr-ḫa-lab*$_x$ "Ḫalab has struck," *ib-za-ḫa-lab*$_x$ "Ḫalab has broken," *iš*$_{11}$*-ru*$_{12}$*-ud-ḫa-lab*$_x$ "Richness of Ḫalab," *puzur*$_4$*-ra-ḫa-lab*$_x$ "A (place of) protection is Ḫalab," and *rí-ì-ḫa-lab*$_x$ "Ḫalab is my shepherd."[116] Other city names, including Nagar and Mari, also appear as theophoric elements.[117]

113 Archi, review of *Il in the Personal Names of the Third Millennium BC*, 139–140.

114 See Archi, "Les dieux d'Ebla au IIIe millenaire avant J.C. et les dieux d'Ugarit," 167: "Grace à l'anthroponymie il est ensuite possible d'établir à un certain degré la diffusion du culte de chaque divinité."

115 For bàd^{ki}, see Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 361, 510. Krebernik suggests that bàd^{ki} is to be understood as "Burg" (*Die Personennamen der Ebla-Texte*, 77).

116 Archi, "Hadda of Ḫalab and His Temple in the Ebla Period," 14–15. Note that Archi suggests that when Ḫalab appears as a theophoric element, it is a circumlocution for the "god of Ḫalab" = Hadda. See also Pelio Fronzaroli, "Les combats de Hadda dans les textes d'Ébla," *MARI* 8 (1997): 286–288.

117 Matthaie, *Ebla*, 74. However, he suggests that "the reference in these instances is probably to a celebrated sanctuary in the city or its vicinity."

A number of abstract concepts occur in theophoric position in personal names at Ebla. Elements that have to do with kinship are among the most frequent. These include *da-ar* "Generation," *da-mu* "Blood(ties)," *li-im* "Clan," *šum* "Name," and *zi-kir* "Name, Fame, Remembrance."[118] The concepts related to kinship are extremely popular in anthroponyms at Ebla: *da-mu* "Blood (ties)," *li-im* "Clan," and *da-ar* "Generation," are among the five most popular theophoric elements attested, and *šum* "Name" and *zi-kir* "Name, Fame, Remembrance" are both quite common as well. The element *da-mu* "Blood (ties)" is by far the most commonly occurring element, featuring in not only over 150 different names but also in many of the names of members of the royal family and the court alongside *li-im* "Clan."[119] For example, the PN *iš-má-da-mu* "Blood(ties) has heard" is associated with nine individuals, while ru_{12}-*zi-da-mu* "Blood(ties)

118 For *da-ar*, see Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 372–373; Krebernik, *Die Personennamen der Ebla-Texte*, 79; and *CAD* D, s.v. "dāru." For *da-mu*, see Krebernik, *Die Personennamen der Ebla-Texte*, 80. For attestations of this element in personal names, see Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 381–388. For *li-im*, see Krebernik, *Die Personennamen der Ebla-Texte*, 95. The term is used in the sense of *clan* at Ugarit. For the attestations at Ebla, see Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 452–454. For *šum*, see Krebernik, *Die Personennamen der Ebla-Texte*, 107. For a list of all occurrences in personal names, see Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 503–505. Pomponio and Xella suggest that *šum* is an "élément théophore bien connu et très répandu, 'nom' … donc 'fils,' 'héritier,' employé aussi pour désigner la 'postérité'" (505). The *CAD* records numerous personal names and other texts in which *šum* clearly means offspring or son (*CAD* Š.3, s.v. "šumu," 284–297). For *zi-kir*, see Krebernik, *Die Personennamen der Ebla-Texte*, 110–111; *CAD* Z, s.v. "zikru." See also Matthaie, *Ebla*, 74. Pomponio and Xella argue, "Zikir n'est donc pas un véritable théonyme, mais la personnification d'une valeur éthique dans la lignée idéologique fondée sur la parenté et les liens du sang" (*Les dieux d'Ebla*, 522).

119 Archi suggests that Blood-ties and Clan are "both deified" (review of *Il in the Personal Names of the Third Millennium BC*, 141). See also Matthaie, *Ebla*, 71–72: "A phenomenon that is widely attested in the Ebla personal names and other areas of Upper Syria and has to be identified as a feature of archaic religion, on the one hand, and on the other as a common feature in the western Semitic area is the widespread presence (reflected by numerous occurrences in Royal Archive documents) of divine entities who stand for personifications of tribal bonds of kinship. Damu is an eminent instance, to be interpreted in all likelihood as 'blood' (understood as the founding element upon which kinship rests), while the clan itself had its divine counterpart in Lim, and possibly also in Kamu, less frequently attested (possibly to be interpreted in the tribal sense of 'lineage'). The remarkable status enjoyed by such divinities, who presided over the cornerstones of the social structure but had no related import on the cosmic or natural plane, stands out vividly in Early Syrian Ebla …. Worshipped in popular religion as well as in the elitist cults of the court, these divinities almost certainly originated in the pre-urban period and were instrumental in the gradual process that led to permanent settlement." However, Pomponio and Xella espouse a different view: "Il ne s'agit donc pas d'un veritable dieu, mais d'une personification abstraite employee comme élément théophore" (*Les dieux d'Ebla*, 387).

has assisted" is the name of three individuals from Emar and Manuwad.[120] The theophoric element "Name" also occurs in many names, such as *šum-be*(*-li*) "Name is my lord", *šu-ma-il/î/î-lum* "Name is god," and *ra-bù-šum* "Name is great."[121] Sometimes more than one of these elements related to familial bonds appears in a personal name: for example, *šum-zi-kir* "Name is Remembrance," *zi-kir-da-mu* "Remembrance of Blood (ties)."

As Pomponio and Xella note concerning the element *da-ar*, "Il pourrait théoriquement s'agir aussi bien d'une personification abstraite que d'une épithète réservée à des divinités inconnues, même si les noms théophores montrent que Dar est invoqué souvent pour accomplir des actions concrètes, somme p.ex. celle d'être 'frère' (*aḫ-*), 'aider' (*ru*$_{12}$*-zi-*), 'aimer' (*ir-am*$_{6}$*-*), 'entendre' (*iš-má*), 'protéger' (?) (*ig-na-*), 'délier' (*ib-dur-*), encore protéger ou libérer (du mal) la descendance."[122] A similar situation obtains for the rest of these concepts: they take on active, agential roles appropriate to deities in the personal names, though their exact nature remains a matter of speculation.

Qualities, especially those associated with the divine, also appear in many personal names at Ebla. For example, *bar-ru*$_{12}$ "Pure," *da-mi-gú* or du$_{10}$ "Good," *da-nu/núm* "Strong," *i-šar* (also spelled *iš-ar* or *iš-ša-ru*$_{12}$) "Righteous," *na-du* "Trustworthy," *-na-im* "Gracious, Favorable," *-we-du* or *-wa-ad/du* "Unique," and *-zi-ru*$_{12}$ "Protection," appear as theophoric elements.[123] These qualities are all commonly associated with deities. These may be understood as "deified appel-

120 For *iš-má-da-mu*, see Pomponio and Xella, 384; Krebernik, *Die Personennamen der Ebla-Texte*, 230. For *ru*$_{12}$*-zi-da-mu*, see Pomponio and Xella, 386; Krebernik, 178.

121 Pomponio and Xella, 503–505.

122 Pomponio and Xella, 373. See also the name *ba-da-ar* "Come, Generation" (Archi et al., *The Prosopography of Ebla*, B, 3).

123 For *bar-ru*$_{12}$, see Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 366; and *CAD* B, s.v. "barru." Krebernik suggests "Jungstier" (*Die Personennamen der Ebla-Texte*, 78). For *da-mi-gú*, see Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 380; Krebernik, *Die Personennamen der Ebla-Texte*, 80. For *da-nu/núm*, see Krebernik, 80. For a list of anthroponyms with *danu* as theophoric element, see Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 389. For *i-šar*, see Archi, review of *Il in the Personal Names of the Third Millennium BC*, 140; Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 440–442; Krebernik, *Die Personennamen der Ebla-Texte*, 90. For *na-du*, see *CAD* N, s.v. "na'du." For attestations see Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 472. See also Krebernik, *Die Personennamen der Ebla-Texte*, 98. For *-na-im*, see Archi, review of *Il in the Personal Names of the Third Millennium BC*, 140; Krebernik, *Die Personennamen der Ebla-Texte*, 98. For a list of attestations, see Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 474. See also Archi et al., *Prosopography of Ebla*, K, 22. For *-we-du*, see Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 513; *CAD* E, s.v. "ēdu"; Krebernik, *Die Personennamen der Ebla-Texte*, 103. For *-zi-ru*$_{12}$, see Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 526; Krebernik, *Die Personennamen der Ebla-Texte*, 111.

latives," as Archi suggests.[124] Other types of objects occur as theophoric elements quite rarely at Ebla. GIŠ-KA "Chariot-Part" only occurs once in a personal name, belonging to someone from Emar: *a-a-*GIŠ-KA "Where is Chariot-Part."[125] Several names such as *íl-gú-ša* "Throne is god," and *ìl*-kù-bar$_6$ "Silver is god" may indicate the conception of these objects as divine.[126]

How exactly to interpret these theophoric elements is not totally clear. It has been suggested that some of the qualities and attributes found in personal names may be alternative designations of particular gods. For example, *šum* may be an epithet for Dumuzi, based on evidence equating the two found in lexical lists from Ebla.[127] However, the evidence from the names themselves does not reveal anything that proves either interpretation conclusively.

3 Observations on the Evidence from Ebla

The evidence from Ebla suggests that several objects, and perhaps also some qualities or attributes, were treated as deities. However, none of these deities appears to have been a particularly prominent member of the pantheon at Ebla during the Early Bronze Age. Even Crown/Two Crowns, the most frequently attested of these deities, does not appear to be high-ranking compared to some of the other, more frequently attested gods. However, Crown/Two Crowns does receive offerings in at least fifteen cases, and it is attested in at least thirty personal names. City receives offerings according to at least eighteen references in the texts. Yet when compared with a goddess such as Išḫara, who is also significant for the royal family, and is attested over a hundred separate times in the administrative texts, as well as in several anthroponyms, they are clearly of more marginal importance. Gate receives only one offering. The Axe of Hadda,

124 Archi, review of *Il in the Personal Names of the Third Millennium* BC, 140.

125 Names consisting of *a-a-*DN, usually with father or brother as the theophoric element, occur in several periods in Mesopotamia, as well as in personal names from Alalakh (*CAD* A, s.v. "aja"). According to Pomponio and Xella, "Il ne peut s'agir que d'un object divinisé, notamment (avec lecture giš-zú) une partie fondamentale du char, décorée avec de l'argent, dont l'identification précise s'avère toutefois difficile" (*Les dieux d'Ebla*, 409).

126 Pomponio and Xella suggest "Throne" as a possible interpretation of *íl-gú-ša*, but conclude that this entity is probably to be identified as the deity Guš, known also from Ugarit (416). However, this entity only appears once in the Ugaritic corpus, in a single personal name (^{m}DUMU-^{d}*gu-ši*). See Karel van der Toorn, "Gush," *DDD*, 375–376. Guš probably also appears in the Aramaic personal name *bir-guš* known from several Old Aramaic inscriptions (Aren M. Wilson-Wright, pers. comm.). For *ìl*-kù-bar$_6$, see Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 446.

127 Pomponio and Xella, 505.

the Chair of Išḫara, and a few objects associated with Rašap may each receive an offering or two in a small number of texts, indicating their minor importance when compared to their owners. However, Crown occurs much more frequently in personal names than many of the most important gods at Ebla: Crown is attested as a theophoric element in anthroponyms more frequently than Hadda, Išḫara, or Rašap, for example, which may demonstrate this deity's popularity.

Several qualities or attributes may receive offerings; however, the interpretation of these names is largely etymological, and in the absence of evidence describing these entities, few conclusions can be drawn with confidence. The same situation applies with objects, concepts, and qualities attested as theophoric elements in personal names. However, the short statements characteristic of personal names do allow some speculation as to their natures: they help, protect, listen, and otherwise relate to human beings in a similar way to anthroform gods and goddesses. Overall, within the texts currently available, objects, qualities, and attributes represent a relatively small proportion of the total of over a hundred potential deities identified by Pomponio and Xella. These entities are generally attested less frequently, and offered smaller offerings, than the main gods in the pantheon. Yet, these types of entities may still represent almost 10 percent of the pantheon at Ebla. In most cases, the evidence for offerings or the actions associated with them in anthroponyms suggest that they were conceived of as potentially benevolent agents who could appreciate gifts or take action on behalf of humans.

The richness of the textual evidence makes Ebla an ideal starting point for the examination of objects, qualities, and attributes as deities in ancient Syria. The fact that they receive offerings, as well as the qualities and/or actions they are ascribed in personal names, suggests that they were similar to anthroform gods in their capacity to appreciate and potentially respond to offerings and in their ability to affect human life. The following three chapters seek to further this discussion by examining evidence from three additional locations and historical settings in ancient Syria in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages: Alalakh, Emar, and Ugarit.

CHAPTER 4

The Evidence from Alalakh

Several texts from Alalakh (modern Tell Atchana) contain evidence for at least one object that may be treated as divine: a weapon belonging to Ištar (dIŠTAR).[1] Ištar is one of the most well-attested deities at this site in both the texts and the archeological record.[2] The goddess had priests and a temple at Alalakh, as evinced by numerous texts as well as archaeological evidence, and is thought to have been the most important goddess there.[3] Thus, it is unsurprising that a possession belonging to her receives cultic attention as well.

The remains of the ancient city of Alalakh are located in the southern Amuq Plain, just east of the Orontes River and about seventy kilometers west of Aleppo, in what is now the province of Hatay in southern Turkey. The site, which was primarily occupied during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, was excavated by Sir Leonard Woolley from 1937–1939 and 1946–1949.[4] New excavations in the area commenced in 1995 as part of the University of Chicago's

1 Interpretations of dIŠTAR vary: D.J. Wiseman suggests Išḫara, based on evidence from a personal name. Wiseman, *The Alalakh Tablets*, Occasional Publications of the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara 2 (London: British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, 1953), 9n2. Frank Zeeb also suggests Išḫara. Zeeb, *Die Palastwirtschaft in Altsyrien nach den spätaltbabylonischen Getreidelieferlisten aus Alalaḫ*, AOAT 282 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2001), 284n331. Jacob Lauinger notes that Ištar, Išḫara, and Šauška are all possible readings, based on syllabic spellings in the onomastic evidence. Lauinger, "The Temple of Ištar at Old Babylonian Alalakh," *JANER* 8, no. 2 (2008): 181–182, https://doi.org/10.1163/156921208786611737. This chapter follows Lauinger in simply rendering the name Ištar for convenience.

2 For a catalog of all known texts from Level VII attesting Ištar, see Lauinger, "Temple of Ištar at Old Babylonian Alalakh," appendix 1. His article also addresses the archaeological evidence for Ištar's temple. See also the earlier study by Nadav Na'aman, "The Ishtar Temple at Alalakh," *JNES* 39, no. 3 (1980): 209–214, https://doi.org/10.1086/372804.

3 For references to the priest of Ištar (lúSANGA dIŠTAR) that appears in witness lists and various records of transactions, see Lauinger, "Temple of Ištar at Old Babylonian Alalakh," 197–199. Na'aman calls Ištar the "great goddess of Alalakh": he identifies the seventeen superimposed temples at Alalakh as dedicated to her and identifies her as the "first lady" or city-goddess of Alalakh ("Ishtar Temple at Alalakh," 209–214). Lauinger also identifies the temple uncovered during excavations by Woolley as Ištar's. He argues that this temple, which received large offerings of grain and other items, may have been within the bounds of both the palace's architecture and the palace's administrative control ("Temple of Ištar at Old Babylonian Alalakh," 181–217).

4 For a concise overview of the site, see Jesse Casana, "Alalakh and the Archaeological Landscape of Mukish: The Political Geography and Population of a Late Bronze Age Kingdom," *BASOR* 353 (2009): 7–37, https://doi.org/10.1086/BASOR27805145. The results of Woolley's

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Amuq Valley Regional Project.[5] The largest site dating to the second millennium BCE in the region, Tell Atchana covers approximately twenty hectares. The earliest evidence for the occupation of the site is from Level XVII (beginning of the Middle Bronze Age). The site was largely destroyed in 1370 BCE during the Hittite invasion of Syria, and finally completely abandoned around 1200–1150 BCE.[6]

Woolley discovered substantial quantities of tablets in two levels: Level VII (dated to the late Middle Bronze Age) and Level IV (dated to the early Late Bronze Age).[7] At the time when the Level VII texts were produced, Alalakh was ruled by a dynasty of kings, beginning with Yarim-Lim, who were vassals of Yamḫad, the kingdom ruled by Ḫalab (Aleppo). The Level VII city was probably destroyed in the early sixteenth century BCE by the Hittite king Ḫattušili I.[8] During the time between the destruction of Level VII and the production of the Level IV texts, Ḫalab came under the hegemony of Mitanni.[9] The Late Bronze Age kings of Alalakh probably exercised control over most of the towns in Mukish, and may also have had holdings outside the Amuq region: the ruler was referred to by both the title of "king of Alalakh" and "king of the land

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excavations are published in Leonard Woolley, *Alalakh: An Account of the Excavations at Tell Atchana in the Hatay, 1937–1949* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955).

5 On the renewed excavations, see K. Aslıhan Yener, *The Amuq Valley Regional Projects, Volume 1: Surveys in the Plain of Antioch and Orontes Delta, Turkey, 1995–2002*, OIP 131 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2005); Yener, *The Amuq Valley Regional Projects, Volume 2: Excavations at Tell Atchana (Ancient Alalakh), the 2003–2004 Excavations Seasons* (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2010); Yener, "New Excavations at Alalakh: The 14th–12th Centuries BC," in *Across the Border: Late Bronze-Iron Age Relations between Syria and Anatolia; Proceedings of a Symposium Held at the Research Center of Anatolian Studies, Koç University, Istanbul May 31–June 1, 2010*, ed. K. Aslıhan Yener, ANESSup 42 (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 11–35.

6 On Alalakh under Hittite rule, see Itamar Singer, "Alalaḫ/Mukiš under Hittite Rule and Thereafter," in *Overturning Certainties in Near Eastern Archaeology: A Festschrift in Honor of K. Aslıhan Yener*, ed. Çiğdem Maner, Mara T. Horowitz, and Allan S. Gilbert, CHANE 90 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 614–633, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004353572_032. The only reoccupation of the site after 1200–1150 consist of "small farmsteads in the Hellenistic and late Roman periods … until the modern village was established at the southern end of the site in late Ottoman times" (Casana, "Alalakh and the Archaeological Landscape of Mukish," 11).

7 For an analysis of the chronological issues concerning the Middle Bronze Age Levels VII–XVII at Alalakh, see Eva von Dassow, *State and Society in the Late Bronze Age Alalaḫ under the Mittani Empire*, SCCNH 17 (Bethesda, MD: CDL, 2008), xvi, 5–11; Wilfred van Soldt, "Syrian Chronology in the Old and Early Middle Babylonian Periods," *Akkadica* 119–120 (2000): 103–116; and Marlies Heinz, *Tell Atchana/Alalakh: Die Schichten VII–XVII*, AOAT 41 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1992).

8 See von Dassow, *State and Society in the Late Bronze Age Alalaḫ under the Mittani Empire*, 12–63; and Heinz, *Tell Atchana/Alalakh*, 194–195.

9 Casana, "Alalakh and the Archaeological Landscape of Mukish," 11.

of Mukish" (*AT* 2).[10] Perhaps the most famous of these rulers is the fifteenth century king Idrimi, whose life is commemorated on his statue, now in the British Museum. Despite whatever aspirations the latter may have had, Alalakh remained under the suzerainty of Mitanni until the Hittite conquest in the mid-fourteenth century BCE.[11] Occupation of the site continued until the end of the Late Bronze Age, though whether the king continued to reside there after the mid-fourteenth century is unclear.[12]

1 Sources from Alalakh

The corpus of just under a thousand tablets and fragments from Tell Atchana are mainly from the Middle Bronze Age Level VII palace and temple and the Late Bronze Age Level IV palace and fortress.[13] The vast majority of tablets were found in Levels VII and IV; the remaining few are from Levels I–III or V–VI.[14] With the exception of a few texts in Hieroglyphic Luwian, almost all of the texts are in Akkadian dialects: the language of the Level VII texts is Old Babylonian, and the Level IV texts are in Middle Babylonian, with varying degrees of Hurrian and Northwest Semitic influence apparent.[15] The content of the texts

10 Casana, 10–11.

11 Von Dassow, *State and Society in the Late Bronze Age Alalaḫ under the Mittani Empire*, xv. On Late Bronze Age Alalakh, see also Christian Niedorf, *Die mittelbabylonischen Rechtsurkunden aus Alalaḫ* (*Schicht IV*), AOAT 352 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008); and Amir Sumaka'i Fink, *Late Bronze Age Tell Atchana* (*Alalakh*)*: Stratigraphy, Chronology, History*, BARIS 2120 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010).

12 Eva von Dassow argues that after the Hittite invasion, the capital was moved to the city of Mukish. Van Dassow, "Archives of Alalah IV in Archaeological Context," *BASOR* 338 (2005): 53, https://doi.org/10.1086/BASOR25066889.

13 Von Dassow, *State and Society in the Late Bronze Age Alalaḫ under the Mittani Empire*, 3 and n5; Lauinger, "Excavated Dossier of Cuneiform Tablets from Level VII Alalah," 21–22n2.

14 The 465 texts from Level VII and Level IV were initially published by Wiseman (*Alalakh Tablets*). Additional tablets were published by Wiseman in "Supplementary Copies of Alalakh Tablets," 1–30. Additional documents not catalogued by Wiseman were published in a series of articles by Manfried Dietrich and Oswald Loretz. See also their editions of Level VII texts. Dietrich and Loretz, "Alalaḫ-Texte der Schicht VII (I): Historische und juristische Dokumente," *UF* 36 (2004): 43–150; "Alalaḫ-Texte der Schicht VII (II): Schuldtexte, Vermerke, und Sonstiges," *UF* 37 (2005): 241–314; and "Alalaḫ-Texte der Schicht VII (III): Die Listen der Gruppen ATaB 40, ATaB 42, ATaB 43 und ATaB 44," *UF* 38 (2006): 87–137. More texts from Level VII were later published in Zeeb, *Die Palastwirtschaft in Altsyrien nach den spätaltbabylonischen Getreidelieferlisten aus Alalaḫ* (*Schicht VII*). Texts are cited according to their numbering in Wiseman (*AT*), Zeeb, or by excavation number (ATT).

15 For a discussion of the influence of Hurrian on the language of the Alalakh texts, see

from both levels is mainly administrative, and consists largely of lists of various types, such as censuses, inventories, and ration lists.

The Level VII tablets were composed in the seventeenth century BCE, when the rulers of Alalakh were under the hegemony of Yamḫad, the major power in northwestern Syria in that period.[16] Almost all of the tablets from Level VII were found in three locations: the temple, Room 2 of the palace, and the palace's storerooms (Rooms 11, 12, and 13).[17] The texts from Alalakh Level IV (fifteenth century BCE) are mostly from the reign of Niqmepa, though a few tablets were preserved from the previous ruler Idrimi's reign, and a few date to the reign of his successor Ilimilimma.[18] Most of the Level IV tablets were found in the palace or the fortress.[19]

Though the texts from Levels VII and IV provide great insight into the economy and society of Alalakh in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, they do not contain a wealth of information about religious practices at the site. There are no ritual texts, and few literary texts. Other than theophoric personal names and some seal impressions, only a few texts give information about deities. Level VII texts that mention deities or temples include exchanges between Abban and Yarim-Lim (*AT* 1, 126),[20] the penalty sections of several contracts (such as *AT* 52, 54, 58, 61), and a small quantity of texts describing offerings or allotments. Among the Level IV tablets, treaties (*AT* 2, 3), the Idrimi inscription,

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Ignacio Márquez Rowe, "Notes on the Hurro-Akkadian of Alalaḫ in the Mid-Second Millennium B.C.E.," in *Past Links: Studies in the Languages and Cultures of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Shlomo Izre'el, Itamar Singer, and Ran Zadok, IOS 18 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 63–78. As von Dassow notes, "Only the scribes used Akkadian or Sumerian, and then only in writing .... Speakers of West Semitic languages predominated during the Middle Bronze Age, while speakers of Hurrian formed a significant minority by the period of Alalaḫ VII .... Speakers of Hurrian appear to be in the majority in Alalaḫ IV" (*State and Society in the Late Bronze Age Alalaḫ under the Mittani Empire*, 70).

16 Lauinger, "Excavated Dossier of Cuneiform Tablets from Level VII Alalah," 36–37.

17 For a detailed discussion of the Level VII texts in their archaeological context, see Lauinger, 21–64. See also the overviews of the Level VII text corpus in Lauinger, *Following the Man of Yamhad: Settlement and Territory at Old Babylonian Alalah*, CHANE 75 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 36–56; and Frank Zeeb, *Die Palastwirtschaft in Altsyrien nach den spätaltbabylonischen Getreidelieferlisten aus Alalaḫ* (*Schicht VII*), 27–66.

18 Von Dassow, "Archives of Alalah IV in Archaeological Context," 50–51.

19 For a detailed breakdown of the findspots of the Level IV tablets along with short descriptions of their contents, see von Dassow, "Archives of Alalaḫ IV in Archaeological Context," 20–29, and chart A. See also the brief overview in Olof Pedersén, *Archives and Libraries in the Ancient Near East 1500–300 B.C.* (Bethesda, MD: CDL, 1998), 36–37.

20 This chapter follows von Dassow's interpretation of the name as Abban (reading ^{m}*Ab-ba*-AN). Others (including Lauinger) read it as Abba-el (reading ^{m}*Ab-ba*-DINGIR) (von Dassow, *State and Society in the Late Bronze Age Alalaḫ under the Mittani Empire*, 13n28).

the appointment of a priest of ^{d}EN.LÍL (*AT* 15), the greetings of a few letters (such as *AT* 116), and the handful of incantations and hymns among the scholarly texts found together in the palace courtyard (*AT* 448–450, 453–453a) are the main texts that mention deities. A group of ten tablets, dated to Level II/III, record distributions of barley for deities and men (*AT* 309–318); two divination texts also date to Levels I–III.[21]

2 A Weapon as a Deity at Alalakh

Despite the fact that relatively few texts give information about religious practices or deities at Alalakh, several of these texts contain evidence for at least one object that may be treated as a deity: a weapon belonging to Ištar. The cult of Ištar at Alalakh has received the most attention in previous studies of religion at Alalakh, since this goddess is one of the most well-attested deities in both the texts and the archaeological record. Ištar had priests and a temple at Alalakh, according to both textual and archaeological evidence, and scholars consider her to be the primary deity of Alalakh, as discussed above.

Though a number of texts describe offerings to Ištar, one text from Level VII at Alalakh also describes an offering directed toward the Weapon of Ištar. Frank Zeeb's text 50 (ATT 11), is a twenty-two-line tablet that describes offerings to Ištar. Line 3 of this text records "1 (*parīšu* of grain) for the Weapon before Ištar" (1 *a-na* ^{giš}TUKUL *pa-ni* ^{d}IŠTAR); the next line records twice that quantity of grain "before Ištar" (2 *a-na pa-ni* ^{d}IŠTAR). A much larger quantity, thirty *parīšu*s, is designated "for the table of Ištar" (*a-na* ^{giš}BANŠUR ^{d}IŠTAR) in line 9.[22] The large quantity of grain described in this and other texts as offerings of/for the "table of Ištar" (^{giš}BANŠUR ^{d}IŠTAR) probably indicate that this phrase is used to mark totals, and not offerings dedicated to the table itself.[23] However, though the

21 Von Dassow, "Archives of Alalaḫ IV in Archaeological Context," 29–30.

22 See also Lauinger, "Temple of Ištar at Old Babylonian Alalakh," 200.

23 Several Level IV texts refer to *paššūrum* as a piece of furniture owned/made by different individuals (*AT* 416:22, 419:1, 421:1). Other texts from Level VII also use the phrase "the table of Ištar." For example, in *AT* 243:9, 13 (= Zeeb 1:9, 13), twenty-five *parīšu*s of grain and twenty *parīšu*s of emmer are each described as "that of the table of Ištar" (*ša* ^{giš}BANŠUR ^{d}IŠTAR). Note that Zeeb reads GIŠ.BANŠUR; Wiseman previously read É.BÀD (Zeeb, *Die Palastwirtschaft in Altsyrien nach den spätaltbabylonischen Getreidelieferlisten aus Alalaḫ (Schicht VII)*, 283). Also, in Zeeb's text 61:3, ten *parīšu*s of barley are designated "for the table of Ištar" (*a-na* ^{giš}BANŠUR ^{d}IŠTAR). Comparing the use of a similar phrase used to refer to the palace stores of grain in *AT* 273:2 (Zeeb 28:2), Zeeb argues that the "table" is not to be interpreted as an actual piece of furniture, but as a metonymic device designat-

grain designated as "for the table of Ištar" probably records a total quantity of grain for Ištar's temple, rather than an offering to the table, the allocation of 1 *parīšu* of grain may be evidence that the Weapon of Ištar is treated as a deity in this text.

It seems likely that the Weapon of Ištar is characterized as an independent deity, rather than just an emblem of Ištar, in this offering record, especially since both the Weapon and the goddess receive similar offerings, but in different quantities. This suggests that the Weapon warranted a separate offering of its own, at least according to this text. The other possible interpretation is to suggest that the Weapon should be considered an emblem of Ištar, perhaps one that served as a substitute for her cult statue, rather than as an independent deity.[24] Yet, this would not explain why offerings are made to the Weapon alongside the goddess. Why bother making a separate offering to the Weapon if it couldn't appreciate the effort?

Another text gives some insight as to how this offering record should be interpreted. Text *AT* 1 from Level VII also describes a divine weapon. This historical text describes Abban's allocation of Alalakh to his brother Yarim-Lim following Abban's quelling of a rebellion of Irride.[25] According to this document, Abban is assisted by several deities in putting down a revolt: Hadad (^{d}IM), Hebat (*ḫé-bat*), and the "Spear [of Ištar]" (^{giš}IGI.DÙ [*ša* ^{d}IŠTAR]).[26] The third member of the triad, which Nadav Na'aman interprets as a spear (reading ^{giš}IGI.DÙ as Akkadian *šukurru*), is written with the determinative appropriate to a weapon as a material object, not with the divine determinative.[27] Yet, it also

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ing stores in the possession of the palace (in *AT* 273), or similarly, of the temple. Zeeb also notes that these may be rounded numbers, since they are all divisible by five.

24 Contra Zeeb, who suggests that the weapon of Ištar should be understood symbolically (*Die Palastwirtschaft in Altsyrien nach den spätaltbabylonischen Getreidelieferlisten aus Alalaḫ* (*Schicht VII*), 287). Na'aman also interprets this weapon as a symbol of Ištar ("Ishtar Temple at Alalakh," 210). The term *kakku* (often written GIŠ.TUKUL) is frequently used to designate a possession or standard of various gods in Akkadian texts (*CAD* K, s.v. "kakku," 52–56). The weapon itself is sometimes described as an actor or agent: e.g., *CT* 39 46:47: "the 'weapon of the deity' will carry him off" (GIŠ.TUKUL DINGIR *itabbalšu*). The term occurs occasionally with the divine determinative (*Or* 21 139:24; *KAV* 42:10). The *CAD* also notes the following "exceptional" usage in Lie *Sar*. 99: "I placed there the symbol of my lord Aššur to be their deity" (GIŠ.TUKUL ^{d}*Aššur bēlija ana ilūtišunu ašk*[*un*]). Weapons were also often used in Mesopotamia as witnesses or guarantors of oaths.

25 According to von Dassow, both *AT* 1 and *AT* 456 may be incomplete: they "give the impression of starting *in medias res*, as if perhaps they were partial copies of longer texts," (*State and Society in the Late Bronze Age Alalaḫ under the Mittani Empire*, 13n27).

26 *AT* 1:2–3, as translated by Na'aman, "Ishtar Temple at Alalakh," 209–210.

27 Interestingly, gold spears have been discovered at the temple of Ištar at Mari. See Joanna

plays a role appropriate to a deity by assisting Abban with his military endeavors. Divine weapons were often carried into battle on military campaigns in the ancient Near East.[28] In this document, the Spear, though explicitly classified as an object, is nevertheless described functioning as a deity by actively assisting a human being in battle.

Based on the triad of deities in *AT* 1 and the Level IV Idrimi inscription, Na'aman suggests that *AT* 456, another Level VII text that describes the same events as *AT* 1, may contain a similar phrase involving weapons of gods. He proposes the following restoration for *AT* 456:24–27: "With the . . [. . of Hebat] and the Mighty Weapon [of Ištar, the la]dy(?); with silver, gold, lapis-lazuli, precious stones and the Strong Weapon of Hadad."[29] In this text too, then, the weapons of gods assist Abban with putting down the revolt in Irride. Certainly, the weapons in this text are characterized in a similar way as the deities and the weapon in *AT* 1.

In these texts, it is possible that the Weapons of Ištar and Hadad are understood as emblems, which could perhaps substitute for the cult statue during battle as a representation and manifestation of the presence of the goddess or god. However, the texts themselves do not indicate this, and the fact that the Weapon of Ištar is the recipient of a separate offering in at least one text indicates that this entity may be considered to be an independent agent, capable of being pleased or placated through gift-giving.

Unfortunately, the personal names from Alalakh do not contribute much to the understanding of these texts. The names from both Level VII and Level IV include a number of different entities as theophoric elements, as would be expected of Akkadian or Hurrian names. However, the majority of the several

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Töyräänvuori, "Weapons of the Storm God in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Traditions," *StOr* 112 (2012): 162n43; André Parrot, *Le temple d'Ishtar*, BAH 65 (Paris: Geuthner, 1956), pl. LXII, figs. 1097, 1098.

28 For an overview of the functions of divine weapons in the ancient Near East, see Töyräänvuori, "Weapons of the Storm God in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Traditions," 147–180. She concludes that they appear most often as standards used in military campaigns and for oath-taking procedures. See also Rivkah Harris, "The Journey of the Divine Weapon," in *Studies in Honor of Benno Landsberger on His Seventy-fifth Birthday, April 21, 1965*, ed. Hans G. Güterbock and Thorkild Jacobsen, AS 16 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1965), 217–224.

29 Na'aman, "Ishtar Temple at Alalakh," 210; see also D.J. Wiseman, "Abban and Alalaḫ," *JCS* 12, no. 4 (1958): 124–129, https://doi.org/10.2307/1359130. Schwemer also notes a similar phrase in A. 1858 (edited as FM 7, 5), which reports the receipt of the "weapons of Addu of Halab" as battle aids for Zimrī-Līm (*Die Wettergottgestalten und Nordsyriens im Zeitalter der Keilschriftkulturen*, 215–217).

thousands of names attested in the texts appear to be Hurrian, and attest Hurrian deities, and therefore must await further study.[30]

3 Observations on the Evidence from Alalakh

In conclusion, the evidence from the Alalakh texts suggests that the Spear or Weapon of Ištar received cultic devotion and may have been conceptualized as an independent agent with similar capabilities to other gods. Certainly, Ištar is the most prominently attested goddess in the Alalakh texts and was probably the city-goddess of Alalakh. The Weapon or Spear of Ištar receives much less cultic devotion in the texts by comparison: it is treated as or functions as a deity in only two or three Level VII texts, but not in personal names or in Level IV texts. The Spear does occur in a prominent and powerful role in *AT* 1 alongside two other major gods, though it is unclear whether the weapon is merely emblematic of the presence of Ištar in this text. But at least as far as the writer of Zeeb's text 50 was concerned, the Weapon of Ištar warranted an offering alongside Ištar, though a smaller portion, showing that this entity may have been conceptualized as separate and received cultic devotion on at least one occasion. It is probable that the Weapon of Ištar in text 50 is the same as the Spear of Ištar that occurs in *AT* 1, or the Weapon of Ištar that may be reconstructed for *AT* 456.

30 For personal names in the Level VII tablets, see the indices in Dietrich and Loretz, "Alalaḫ-Texte der Schicht VII (I)," "Alalah-Texte der Schicht VII (II)," and "Alalah-Texte der Schicht VII (III)." Von Dassow collects the personal names attested in the Alalakh IV texts in *State and Society in the Late Bronze Age*, 395–502. On Hurrian personal names, see Thomas Richter, *Vorarbeiten zu einem hurritischen Namenbuch*, vol. 1: *Personnamen altbabylonischer Überlieferung vom Mittleren Euphrat und aus dem nördlichen Mesopotamien* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2016). The present author is not prepared to analyze names in Hurrian and has not attempted to do so in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5

The Evidence from Emar

Similar to Alalakh, at Emar (modern Meskene) there is evidence of a weapon that is treated as a deity in certain contexts. Moreover, *sikkānu* stones also receive cultic attention. The site of the Late Bronze Age town of Emar is located on the western bank of the Euphrates River about ninety kilometers southeast of Aleppo in Syria. The site was excavated by a French expedition led by Jean-Claude Margueron from 1972–1976, made exigent by plans to create a dam on the Euphrates at Tabqa.[1] What remained above water was later revisited by Syrian and German-Syrian teams. Most of the material remains from the site, which measures approximately 1000 m × 700 m, date from the fourteenth century BCE until its destruction in the beginning of the twelfth century.[2] Though it was never a major power in the region, its position was advantageously located at an important crossroads for trade.[3] Emar (or, prior to the Late Bronze Age, Imar) is referenced in sources from Ebla dating to the late third millennium, as well as Old Babylonian sources from Mari and Alalakh, but Early and Middle Bronze Age remains were not discovered by the French team.[4] However, subsequent excavations by the German-Syrian team (1996–2002) unearthed architectural remains and pottery dating to the Early and Middle Bronze Ages.[5]

1 On the early excavations, see Wayne T. Pitard, "The Archaeology of Emar," in *Emar: The History, Religion, and Culture of a Syrian Town in the Late Bronze Age*, ed. Mark Chavalas (Bethesda, MD: CDL, 1996), 13–23; Jean-Claude Margueron, "Meskene (Imar*/Emar), B: Archäologisch," *RlA* 8:84–93.

2 Fleming, *Time at Emar*, 2–4.

3 John T. Thames Jr., *The Politics of Ritual Change: The* zukru *Festival in the Political History of Late Bronze Age Emar*, HSM 65 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 3–4; Regine Pruzsinzsky and Bárbara E. Solans, "Emar's Role in Transregional Trade at the Crossroads along the Middle Euphrates," in *Policies of Exchange: Political Systems and Modes of Interaction in the Aegean and the Near East in the 2nd Millennium B.C.E.; Proceedings of the International Symposium at the University of Freiburg, Institute for Archaeological Studies, 30th May–2nd June 2012*, ed. Birgitta Eder and Regine Pruzsinzsky (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Science, 2015), 315–337.

4 Matthew Rutz, *Bodies of Knowledge in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Diviners of Late Bronze Age Emar and Their Tablet Collection*, AMD 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 45–47, 58.

5 Rutz, *Bodies of Knowledge in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 81–83. See the preliminary excavation reports, Uwe Finkbeiner, "Emar 1999—Bericht über die 3. Kampagne der syrisch-deutschen ausgrabungen," *BagM* 32 (2001): 41–110; Finkbeiner, "Emar 2001—Bericht über die 4. Kampagne der syrisch-deutschen ausgrabungen," *BagM* 33 (2002): 109–146; and Finkbeiner and Ferhan Sakal, "Emar 2002—Bericht über die 5. Kampagne der syrisch-deutchen ausgrabungen," *BagM* 34 (2003): 9–118; as well as the first volume of the final report, Finkbeiner and

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1 Sources from Emar

The almost two thousand cuneiform tablets and fragments uncovered during the excavations of Emar are dated from the end of the fourteenth century to the beginning of the twelfth century.[6] The texts, which include economic documents, contracts, letters, lexical texts, omens, incantations, rituals, and a few literary texts, are written in several languages. The majority of the texts containing practical records, as well as the rituals, are in a dialect of Akkadian influenced by West Semitic;[7] the Mesopotamian lexical texts, omen collections, incantations, and literary texts are in Akkadian and Sumerian; a few additional texts are in Hittite or Hurrian.[8]

It is noteworthy that the archives found at Emar do not constitute palace or temple archives. Most of the texts were found in Areas A and M, with a vast majority coming from building M_1.[9] Though this structure was initially identified as a temple by Margueron, subsequent scholars have noted that it has many of the characteristics of a large house. Daniel Fleming describes the building as a "modified public sacred space,"[10] while Yoram Cohen argues that it was a

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Sakal, *Emar after the Closure of the Tabqa Dam: The Syrian-German Excavations 1996–2002*, vol. 1: *Late Roman and Medieval Cemeteries and Environmental Studies*, Subartu 25 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010).

6 Rutz provides an extensive discussion of the history of the site and its archives (*Bodies of Knowledge in Ancient Mesopotamia*). For more concise overviews, see Pedersén, *Archives and Libraries in the Ancient Near East 1500–300 B.C.*, 61–68; and Gary Beckman, "Emar and Its Archives," in Chavalas, *Emar*, 1–12.

7 Beckman states that the "scribal dialect" used for the practical records and rituals is "an Akkadian dialect strongly marked by the local West Semitic substratum," ("Emar and Its Archives," 7). See also Ron Zadok, "Notes on the West Semitic Material from Emar," *Annali Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli* 51 (1991): 113–137.

8 For a brief overview of the types of texts found at Emar and their findspots, see Yoram Cohen, *The Scribes and Scholars of the City of Emar in the Late Bronze Age*, HSS 59 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 9–12. Daniel Arnaud published the Akkadian and Sumerian tablets in *Emar: Recherches au pays d'Aštata*, 4 vols. (Paris: Éditions recherche sur les civilisations, 1985–1987). On the Hittite texts, see Mirjo Salvini and Marie-Clause Trémouille, "Les textes hittites de Meskéné/Emar," *SMEA* 45 (2003): 225–271. For the texts in Hurrian, see Mirjo Salvini, *Les textes hourrites de Meskéné/Emar*, vol. 1: *Transcription, autographies, planches photographiques*, AnOr 57 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute Press, 2015).

9 On the tablet findspots see the detailed reconstruction in Rutz, *Bodies of Knowledge in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 107–126. Rutz calculates that 1707 individual pieces of tablets, comprising at least 300 texts, were found in building M_1.

10 Fleming, *Time at Emar*, 4–6 and 35–42. See also Thomas L. McClellan, "Houses and Households in North Syria during the Late Bronze Age," in *Les maisons dans la Syrie antique du IIIe millénaire aux débuts de l'Islam: Pratique et représentations de l'espace domestique; Actes du Colloque International, Damas, 27–30 juin 1992*, ed. Corinne Castel, Mishal

house that also functioned as a school, library, and archive, based on its layout and the types of texts found there.[11] Matthew Rutz also suggests that this structure has "much more in common with domestic structures" and is probably best characterized as an "urban elite residence," based on both its architecture and the material assemblage found therein.[12]

The building M_1 archive is often referred to as the "Diviner's Archive," due to the prominent role in many of its texts of "the diviner (lúḪAL or lúMÁŠ.ŠU.GÍD.GÍD) of the gods of Emar." Rutz describes the diviners at Emar as "local religious specialists who took on a prestigious title, diviner, that carried with it a host of associations."[13] This title was held by Zū-Baʿla and his descendants, who probably supervised the building and its archive, and who played a leading role in the rituals attested by the texts found in this building.[14] The texts found in M_1 can be divided into three main categories: Mesopotamian scholarly texts (including lexical lists, divinatory texts, incantations, and literary texts), texts pertaining to the local cult, and letters and legal documents not related to the cult.[15]

2 Objects as Deities at Emar

The focus here is on the texts that are thought to be the most likely to represent local tradition. While most of the literary compositions found at Emar originated in Mesopotamia, the land of Aštata, including the city of Emar, was under Hittite control during the Late Bronze Age.[16] The influence of the Hit-

al-Maqdissi, and François Villeneuve, BAH 150 (Beirut: Institut français d'archéologie du Proche-Orient, 1997), 30.

11 Cohen, *Scribes and Scholars of the City of Emar in the Late Bronze Age*, 54–56.

12 Rutz, *Bodies of Knowledge in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 304, 307.

13 Rutz, 320–321.

14 See Fleming, *Time at Emar*, 26–30.

15 The Mesopotamian texts were published by Arnaud as Emar 536–793, the ritual texts as Emar 369–535, the administrative texts relating to the cult as Emar 274–368, the Akkadian letters as Emar 258–273, and the legal documents as Emar 137–198 and 227–257 (Fleming, *Time at Emar*, 14). For a discussion of the various genres of texts from building M_1, see Rutz, *Bodies of Knowledge in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 127–275. For a chronological analysis of the M_1 texts, see Fleming, *Time at Emar*, 13–47.

16 For a similar reason, Gary Beckman does not include the Mesopotamian texts in his survey of the gods of the pantheon of Emar in "The Pantheon of Emar," in *Silva Anatolica: Anatolian Studies Presented to Maciej Popko on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. Piotr Taracha (Warsaw: Agade, 2002), 39–54.

tites on ritual practice at Emar is debated,[17] though the corpus includes rituals for Hittite deities, and the presence of Hittite oracles suggests that the diviners associated with building M_1 were "ideologically attuned" to Hittite practice.[18] This section focuses on the texts thought to record some of the local rituals and festivals most characteristic of Emar (Emar 369–535), including texts related to the annual *zukru* festival (Emar 373, 375), the installation of the high priestess (Emar 369), the installation of the *maš'artu* priestess (Emar 370), the *kissu* festivals (Emar 385–388), and the "Text for Six Months" (Emar 446 and Emar 452), as well administrative texts related to the local cult, such as the sacrificial lists (Emar 378–384).[19]

In his overview of the pantheon of Emar, Gary Beckman includes "Ḫaṣinnu" ("Axe") an entity he identifies as a "divinized cultic implement," which occurs in a number of texts thought to represent local traditions and rituals.[20] In Emar 375 (/448/449), a text that probably contains an older version of the *zukru*, "Axe of the Gods" (d*ḫa-ṣí-in-nu ša* DINGIR), follows Dagan in procession, and later in the same text processes along with the cult statues of Dagan and the other deities between the upright stones, where much of the ritual takes place.[21] The upright or standing stones or stelae (*sikkānū*), one of which is associated with dNIN.URTA, are anointed with blood and oil, and sacrifices are performed in their midst.[22] In this text, Axe is labeled as a deity by the consistent use of the divine determinative, which is clear in lines 12, 22, and 29. Its inclusion in the procession alongside Dagan and the other gods also indicates that the Axe functions similarly to the cult statues of other deities in this ritual: "On the

17 See the recent discussion in Thames, *Politics of Ritual Change*, 280–313.

18 Rutz, *Bodies of Knowledge in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 320. Rutz points out that the diviners of building M_1 "valued and acknowledged" the Hittite method of recording oracles (*Bodies of Knowledge in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 320). For the Hittite corpus of rituals, see Doris Prechel, "Hethitische Rituale in Emar?," in *The City of Emar among the Late Bronze Age Empires: History, Landscape, and Society; Proceedings of the Konstanz Emar Conference 25.–26.04.2006*, ed. Lorenzo d'Alfonso, Yoram Cohen, and Dietrich Sürenhagen, AOAT 349 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008), 243–252.

19 The aforementioned texts, except for the final group, are cited according to Fleming's reeditions in *Time at Emar*. The last group of texts is cited according to the editions in Arnaud, *Emar*, vol. 3.

20 Beckman, "Pantheon of Emar," 43. He identifies the following occurrences of this entity in economic and administrative texts from Emar, which he believes most clearly represent "native" beliefs (as opposed to the literary texts, which have a Mesopotamian origin): Emar 375: [5], 6, 12, 22; 448:1, 4.

21 Emar 375: [5], 6, 12, 22, 29. See Fleming, *Time at Emar*, 258. On the relative dating of the two versions of the *zukru* (Emar 375 and Emar 373), see Thames, *Politics of Ritual Change*, 16–22.

22 The *sikkānu* stones are discussed further below.

seventh day just as the [fifteenth(?)] day, / Dagan and the gods and the Axe, / [the ox and sheep(?)] go out in procession [to] the upright stones. They eat and drink."[23] The close association of the Axe with the procession is underscored by the writing in line 22, which refers specifically to the "Axe of the procession" (d*ḫa-ṣí-nu ša* dKASKAL).[24]

The orthography in the *zukru* text discussed above, in which Axe is written with the divine determinative, contrasts with other occurrences of "Axe of the Gods" in texts from Emar in which it is not written with the divine determinative. For example, the "Axe of the God(s)" (*ḫa-ṣí-in-nu ša* DINGIR) that follows dNIN.URTA in procession in the Text for Six Months (Emar 446) does not receive the divine determinative (Emar 446:15, 40, 43, 88, 101, 103). It does, however, reside in the temple, like cult statues: "The Axe of the God(s) takes up residence in the temple" (*ḫa-ṣí-in-nu ša* DINGIR *a-na* É *ú-sa-ab*; Emar 446:101). Perhaps the divine determinative was considered superfluous, since the designation "of the God(s)" (*ša* DINGIR) follows. The "Weapon" (written giš TUKUL), probably to be understood as the Axe, also occurs in three fragmentary ritual texts: Emar 403, 420, and 422. In these texts, it does not receive the divine determinative, and its role is unclear.[25] In Emar 452, a tablet concerning offerings during the month of Abî, the "Weapon of the Gods" (giš TUKUL DINGIR.RA) is brought out on the seventeenth day, prior to the offering behind the temple of dNIN.URTA (Emar 452:25).[26]

Though it is again not written with the divine determinative in this text, the Weapon or Axe also plays an important role in another major local festival at Emar: the installation of the NIN.DINGIR, the priestess of the storm-god (Emar 369). This festival takes place over the course of nine days, on the occasion when the selection of a new priestess was made necessary by the death

23 [*a-na* na]4 *sí-ka-na-tì i-na* [u_4]-*mi* 7 *ki-ma* u_4-⌜*mi*⌝ [15(?)] / [d*Da-ga*]*n ù* DINGIR$^{ḫi.a}$ *ù* d*Ḫa-ṣí-in-nu ša* DINGIR / [GUD(?) UDU(?)^{ḫi}]^{a} *ú-ṣí-ú*. Translation modified slightly from Fleming's in his composite version of the annual *zukru*; the transliteration is from the best-preserved version (text A), lines 28–30 (see *Time at Emar*, 262–263).

24 Thames, *Politics of Ritual Change*, 57. As he notes, this is similar to the "Journey of the Divine Weapon" described in Old Babylonian texts from southern Mesopotamia, in which a god's weapon processes to a given location, usually around the time of the harvest (VAB 5 196; *CT* 4 18c, 29a, 23c; TCL 1 140:1, 7; CBS 24, 80, 1356). See also Harris, "Journey of the Divine Weapon" 217–224; and Spaey, "Emblems in Rituals in the Old Babylonian Period," 411–420.

25 Fleming notes: "W.L. Moran (personal communication) suggests that giš TUKUL may even be a Sumerogram for *ḫaṣṣinnu* at Emar." Daniel E. Fleming, *The Installation of Baal's High Priestess at Emar: A Window on Ancient Syrian Religion*, HSS 42 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 50.

26 See Fleming, *Time at Emar*, 284–285.

of the previous one.[27] A number of deities appear in the text, including the storm god (dIM), "all the gods of Emar," "the gods" (possibly indicating a more limited group), dNIN.KUR, "the gods below," Adammatera, Ḫebat (the storm god's consort) and her Stela (*sikkānu*), and Šaḫru.[28] The Weapon or Axe of the Gods (written either logographically as giš TUKUL DINGIR.MEŠ, or syllabically as *ḫa-ṣi-in-nu ša* DINGIR.MEŠ) plays a major part in the several processions that feature in this festival.

The weapon first appears in lines 7–8 of the text, during the procession of the newly chosen NIN.DINGIR to the temple of the storm-god (dIM): "One ox (and) six sheep, the offering of the NIN.DINGIR, will go to the temple of dIM, and the Weapon and the NIN.DINGIR will go behind them, (while) the singers will go ahead of them."[29] After the shaving of the priestess's hair during the *kubadu* ceremony, the father of the NIN.DINGIR carries the Weapon for her. This is followed by offerings to deities, feasting, and other activities, until the installation of the NIN.DINGIR. When she processes to the temple of dIM, the order is again the sheep for offering, followed by the Weapon and the NIN.DINGIR, with the singers in front. This time, the NIN.DINGIR carries the Weapon, before returning once more to her father's house. While in her father's house, the Weapon is placed on dNIN.KUR for seven days.[30] This may indicate that this Weapon is considered to be a possession or emblem of dNIN.KUR. The Weapon again processes with the NIN.DINGIR in the same order in line 63, before the priestess is at last installed in the temple.

Though many of the texts discussed above omit the divine determinative, the Weapon is clearly described as a divine possession. The fact that it processes with cult statues may indicate that it was, to a certain extent, perceived as capable of motion, a key characteristic of agents. Moreover, the Weapon's inclusion in processions such as these that include animals for sacrifice may indicate something else. For example, in Emar 447, another ritual text, a num-

27 Fleming, *Installation of Baal's High Priestess at Emar*, 65.

28 Fleming, 71–79.

29 1 GUD 6 UDU.ḪI.A SISKUR *ša* NIN.DINGIR *a-na* d[...] giš TUKUL DINGIR.MEŠ / *ù* NIN.DINGIR EGIR-*ki-šu-nu* DU-*lak* lú.meš*za-ma-ru a-na pa-n*[*i-š*]*u-nu* DU-*ku*. According to Fleming's text C, with minor modifications to his composite translation (*Installation of Baal's High Priestess at Emar*, 11, 43).

30 giš TUKUL DINGIR-*lì a-na* UGU dNIN.KUR U4.7.KÁM *i-*⟨⟨*na-*⟩⟩*šak-kán-nu*. Emar 369:46, according to Fleming's transliteration of text A. Text B has "axe" (*ḫa-ṣi-in-nu*) instead of giš TUKUL. The syllabic spelling also alternates with giš TUKUL in line 45 and 63, as noted by Fleming, and "both terms should represent the same item in the ritual. Thus the actual weapon is apparently an axe, though it is often called simply 'the weapon' (*kakku*)" (*Installation of Baal's High Priestess at Emar*, 50n7).

ber of animals are listed as sacrificial offerings for deities and their temples, with the Axe following them in procession (*ḫa-ṣí-nu ša* DINGIR *ar-ki-šu-nu i-l*[*a-ak*; Emar 447:14). The Axe does not receive a sacrifice, and is not written with the divine determinative, unlike the other deities mentioned in this text. Perhaps the Axe is the divine means of dispatching the animal sacrifices. If this is the case, it would have been perceived as taking an active and essential role in the rituals.

Another text may offer further insight. Emar 373 is an expanded text describing the *zukru* festival.[31] This tablet contains one of the most extensive lists of the deities of Emar, since the text itself purports to include "all the deities of Emar."[32] This festival seems to have had special importance, and may have been the largest and most significant ritual to take place there.[33] Beginning at line 75 of this text, a "comprehensive catalog of the service for 'all the gods of Emar'" is given, in the form of a list of deities and their appropriate offerings.[34] The list is divided into three groups, beginning with the most important deities in the first group, and lesser deities in the subsequent two groups.[35] Each deity within the same group receives the same offerings, in the same quantity. The Weapon or Axe appears in this text as part of a procession, following the wagon carrying Dagan and ^{d}NIN.URTA, in the fourth column of the text: "The [Weapon] of the gods follows him."[36] In this later version of the *zukru*, the Weapon continues to be an important part of the procession, alongside the cult statues.

In addition to the Axe, Standing Stones or Stelae (*sikkānū*) play a key role in a number of texts from Emar, including Emar 373 and 375.[37] During the annual *zukru*, the statue of Dagan and those of other important deities exit the city via the "Gate of the Standing Stones."[38] Though the statue's face is covered for

31 As Thames notes, this text seems to be an updated version of the *zukru* festival described in Emar 375, which reflects the imperial patronage and influence of the Hittite rulers. See *Politics of Ritual Change*, 84–222.

32 Gary Beckman, "La Religion d'Émar," in del Olmo Lete, *Mythologie et Religion*, 2:7.

33 Fleming, *Time at Emar*, 49; Thames, *Politics of Ritual Change*, 16–228.

34 Fleming, 79.

35 Beckman, "La Religion d'Émar," 7.

36 Emar 373:165; Fleming, *Time at Emar*, 246–247.

37 On the cultic significance of standing stones in Syria, see Jean-Marie Durand, *Le culte des pierres et les monuments commémoratifs en Syrie Amorrite*, FM 8 (Paris: Société pour l'étude du Proche-Orient ancient, 2005); on standing stones at Emar see Patrick M. Michel, *Le culte des pierres à Emar à l'époque Hittite*, OBO 266 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014). As they note, *sikkānu* stones are attested receiving cultic attention at Ebla, Mari, and Emar, as well as Ugarit (*skn*).

38 Emar 373:180–182; Fleming, *Time at Emar*, 249. Thames suggests that the *sikkānu* stones were in fact "features of a gate, as pillars or doorposts" (*Politics of Ritual Change*, 65).

his grand exit and entrance away from and back into the city, Dagan is then conveyed via wagon or chariot between the Stones with face uncovered.[39] This may indicate that Dagan and the Stones are perceived as "meeting" or communicating in some fashion at this point in the festival. As Fleming points out, "it is likely that this is an exchange between sentient beings, not simply Dagan's observation of a traditional religious site."[40] The Stones are later anointed with blood and oil, perhaps as a way of "feeding the aniconic deities with the blood of sacrificed animals,"[41] or of "vivifying" the objects (Emar 373:34, 60, 167).[42] Interestingly, at least one Stela also specifically receives a food offering in Emar 373: the Stela of Ḫebat (ᵈ*si-ka-ni ša* ᵈ*ḫé-bat*), marked with the divine determinative, receives the same offering as a number of other deities, including the deified "Clan of Sarta" (ᵈ*li-ʾi-*˹*mi* ˺ *sar-ta*) and "Two Pair of Baliḫ of the Palace Garden" as well as two additional sets of Baliḫ that appear in the plural (Emar 373:159, 156, 141, 146, 151).[43] It is noteworthy that a number of nonanthroform deities appear together in this section of the text and that they receive similar offerings, which they were apparently considered to be capable of recognizing and appreciating, and most likely responding to benevolently.

Standing Stones also appear in the two rituals concerning the installation of priestesses discussed above. In Emar 669, the ritual of the installation of the NIN.DINGIR priestess of the storm-god, the priestess is anointed and then the Stela of NIN.KUR is anointed in a similar way. This stone appears to be located within the urban context, within a shrine called *bīt gadda*.[44] A *sikkānu* stone is also placed on a roof during the ritual installation of the *mašʾartu* priestess

39 The visitation of standing stones by the statues of anthroform deities is also attested in a number of Hittite texts. See CTH 525.3 and CTH 525.2; see also the discussion in Patrick M. Michel, "Worshipping Gods and Stones in Late Bronze Age Syria and Anatolia," in *Mesopotamia in the Ancient World: Impact, Continuities, Parallels; Proceedings of the Seventh Symposium of the Melammu Project Held in Obergurgl, Austria, November 4–8, 2013*, ed. Robert Rollinger and Erik van Dongen, Melammu Symposia 7 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2015), 59–63.

40 Daniel E. Fleming, "Seeing and Socializing with Dagan at Emar's *zukru* Festival," in Pongratz-Leisten and Sonik, *Materiality of Divine Agency*, 207, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501502262-011.

41 Michel, "Worshipping Gods and Stones in Late Bronze Age Syria and Anatolia," 57.

42 Gary Beckman, "Blood in Hittite Ritual," *JCS* 63 (2011): 101, https://doi.org/10.5615/jcunestud.63.0095. Thames argues rather that the blood has a purifying function (*Politics of Ritual Change*, 69–71).

43 See ch. 3 for a discussion of Two Baliḫ at Ebla. Fleming, *Time at Emar*, 246–247. "Clan of Sarta," "Two Baliḫ of the Garden of the King," and River (ÍD) also appear in Emar 378. Baliḫ also appears in Emar 379. Both Emar 378 and 279 are sacrificial lists.

44 Thames, *Politics of Ritual Change*, 62; Fleming, *Installation of Baal's High Priestess at Emar*, 115–116.

in Emar 370, where it may be anointed with cedar-perfumed oil,[45] and seems to receive offerings (Emar 370:41, 43).[46] Finally, *sikkānu* stones also appear in curses, in which repercussions include the planting of a *sikkānu* stone on the cursed one's house (Emar 125:40).[47] Given the common use of stelae in cults of the dead in the ancient Levant, this curse may imply a death wish for the offender.[48] The same stones are occasionally referred to as *ḫarṣu* stones, which has encouraged some to posit that these stones were engraved.[49]

Neither the Weapon/Axe nor the *sikkānu* stones appear in any anthroponyms from Emar. Many of the names attested in the Emariote corpus consist of a single word designating an abstract quality or concept: for example, *ḫinnu* "Mercy" and *ḫanna* or *ḫannānu* "Merciful" are common names, as is *ḫab'u* "Hidden."[50] There are many theophoric names consisting of two elements: a theophoric element and a nominal or verbal predicate, or a noun in construct with a deity's name. The most common theophoric names focus on the major gods of the Emarite pantheon: Dagan appears in about 150 names, while the storm-god appears in around 90 names.[51] Other popular deities in personal names are Šaggar, Rašap, Aštart, and Šamaš, which each appear in more than a dozen names; Hurrian deities also occur with some frequency, including Teššub and Ḫepat.[52]

However, a few objects, as well as some qualities or attributes, also appear in theophoric position in personal names from Emar.[53] For example, *dūr*(*u*)

45 For the cedar-perfumed oil, see Michel, "Worshipping Gods and Stones in Late Bronze Age Syria and Anatolia," 58–59.

46 For the offerings, see Thames, *Politics of Ritual Change*, 63.

47 Thames, 63.

48 See Thames, 63n177; and Manfried Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Walter Mayer, "Sikkanum 'Betyle,'" *UF* 21 (1989): 137.

49 Michel, *Le culte des pierres à Emar à l'époque Hittite*, 81. Thames, on the other hand, suggests that the root from which this term stems has "the primary meanings of 'determine' or 'designate'" in Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic, and "the meaning in Arabic is 'to rend, cleave'—to divide something into separate parts," suggesting, "That is what the *sikkānu*-stones, sometimes descriptively called *ḫarṣu* stones, did: they divided between sacred and mundane spaces" (*Politics of Ritual Change*, 64).

50 See the attestations listed in Regine Pruzsinszky, *Die Personennamen der Texte aus Emar*, SCCNH 13 (Bethesda, MD: CDL, 2003), 351–352, 342–343, 339–341. However, these names may be shortened versions of theophoric names, with the theophoric element left out.

51 Yoram Cohen, "Public Religious Sentiment and Personal Piety in the Ancient Near Eastern City of Emar during the Late Bronze Age," *Religion Compass* 1, no. 3 (2007): 336, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8171.2007.00027.x.

52 Cohen, "Public Religious Sentiment and Personal Piety in the Ancient Near Eastern City of Emar during the Late Bronze Age," 336.

53 For a complete analysis of personal names from the Emar texts, see Pruzsinszky, *Die Personennamen der Texte aus Emar*.

("Wall") appears in the personal name ^{m}BÀD-BE "Wall is lord," while *li'm* ("Clan") is a popular theophoric element in a number of names and occasionally receives the divine determinative (for example, ^{md}*lim-a-bi*).[54] The Hurrian name ^{m}*en-na-ma-a-di* appears to mean "Gods are Wisdom."[55] In addition, *takutī* ("My Trust"), and *dārû* ("Eternal") also occur as theophoric elements.[56]

3 Observations on the Evidence from Emar

In conclusion, out of the myriad of deities who are offered sacrifices in the ritual texts from Emar, a few objects also receive similar cultic attention. The Axe is treated in similar ways to other deities in several texts and is explicitly labeled with the divine determinative in at least some of them. This suggests that this object was considered worthy and capable of appreciating and responding to cultic attention. Moreover, certain *sikkānu* stones also receive offerings and are occasionally marked with the divine determinative. In addition, a few personal names are relevant to the discussion. This evidence suggests that objects, as well as abstract concepts, were deified at Emar.

54 For ^{m}BÀD-BE, see *SMEA* 24, 8; see also the supplemental material for Pruzsinszky, 300. For *li'm*, see PdA 66, 18; see also the supplemental material for Pruzsinszky, 593.

55 HCCT-E 14, 4.10; see the supplemental material for Pruzsinszky, 319.

56 For examples, see Pruzsinszky, 104, 124, 126, 130, 134, 139, 214.

CHAPTER 6

The Evidence from Ugarit

In the century since the initial discovery of the Ugaritic archives, much research has been devoted to the more than two hundred deities attested therein. Many of these deities, such as ʾIlu, Baʾlu, and ʿAnatu, are vividly described with humanlike forms in mythological texts; however, less anthropoid entities are also treated as deities in a number of other important religious texts.[1] This chapter focuses on objects, qualities, and attributes that receive cultic attention in ritual texts from Ugarit, including Censer, Lyre, Doorbolt, and some qualities and attributes. An examination of these entities contributes to a fuller understanding of the variety of forms of deity that enriched religious life at Ugarit. Many of the texts that attest such deities imply that they were conceptualized as cognizant agents capable of appreciating offerings or taking action; in this respect, they are similar to anthroform deities.

The site of the ancient city of Ugarit (modern Ras Shamra) is located less than one kilometer from the central Syrian coast, near a port (modern Minet el-Beida) that played an important role in sea trade with neighboring kingdoms. Following the accidental discovery of a nearby tomb by a local farmer, Ras Shamra has been excavated since 1929 by French, and, starting in 1999, by French and Syrian archaeologists.[2] Though the site was occupied from the Early Neolithic period until its destruction at the beginning of the twelfth century BCE, Ugarit is best known from the fourteenth to twelfth centuries, thanks in large part to the numerous texts from the site that date to that period.[3]

1 For example, Olyan mentions several examples of "divine attributes" and "cultic elements" that "receive some form of cultic devotion" in the Ugaritic texts in his brief survey. He remarks that Baʾlu's temple and Mount Ṣapānu receive sacrifices in RS 24.249; "Divine Thrones" (*ilht ksʾat*) and "Divine Seats" (*ilm kḥṯm*) are given wine in *KTU* 1.4 VI 35–59; and "Lyre" (*knr*), "Censer" (*uṯṯt*), "Divine Lance" (*mrḥ il*), "Holiness" (*qdš*), "Justice" (*mšr*), and "Righteousness" (*ṣdq*) appear in various lists of deities (*Thousand Thousands Served Him*, 97).

2 On Ugarit's accidental discovery, see Pierre Bordreuil and Dennis Pardee, *A Manual of Ugaritic*, LSAWS 3 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 1–6. For overviews of the site and its excavation history, see Marguerite Yon, *The City of Ugarit at Tell Ras Shamra* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006); Mary E. Buck, *The Amorite Dynasty of Ugarit: Historical Implications of Linguistic and Archaeological Parallels*, SAHL 8 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 1–13; and Yves Calvet, "Ugarit: The Kingdom and the City—Urban Features," in *Ugarit at Seventy-Five*, ed. K. Lawson Younger Jr. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 101–111, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781575065885-008.

3 There is evidence of minimal occupation in the Persian period (Calvet, "Ugarit," 104).

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Following a prior period of Egyptian influence, Ugarit came under Hittite control around 1360 BCE; it is during this time when most of the texts from the archives were written.[4] Under the Hittite administration, the kingdom ruled from the capital city of Ugarit is estimated to have encompassed an area up to two thousand square kilometers along the northern Levantine coast.[5] Ugarit was destroyed around 1190–1185 BCE, during the reign of Ammurapi, the last king of Ugarit, alongside many other kingdoms that collapsed at the end of the Late Bronze Age.[6]

1 Sources from Late Bronze Age Ugarit

The Ugaritic text corpus, comprising several thousand tablets, is one of the richest sources of evidence from North Syria in the second millennium BCE. The archives from Ugarit date to the Late Bronze Age,[7] and the texts and seal impressions mention eight kings.[8] The earliest extant texts are from the reign of Niqmaddu II; most date to the thirteenth century.[9] The documents from Ugarit are mainly written in Akkadian (primarily in syllabic cuneiform) and Ugaritic (written with a unique system of thirty alphabetic cuneiform signs),[10] but some are also in other languages, including Sumerian, Hittite, Hurrian, Egyptian, Cypro-Minoan, Phoenician, and Luwian.[11] Tablets were recovered from a number of archives found in both palatial contexts and in the homes of officials and priests.

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4 For a concise overview of the political history of Ugarit, see Itamar Singer, "A Political History of Ugarit," in *Handbook of Aramaic Studies*, ed. Wilfred G.E. Watson and Nicolas Wyatt, HdO 39 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 603–733.

5 Yon, *City of Ugarit at Tell Ras Shamra*, 9.

6 Yon, 21–22.

7 For a brief overview of the corpus, see Pedersén, *Archives and Libraries in the Ancient Near East 1500–300 B.C.*, 68–79.

8 Yon, *City of Ugarit at Tell Ras Shamra*, 24.

9 Robert Hawley, Dennis Pardee, and Carole Roche-Hawley, "The Scribal Culture of Ugarit," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History* 2, no. 2 (2015): 229–267, https://doi.org/10.1515/janeh-2016-0011.

10 On the alphabetic cuneiform script, see Hawley, Pardee, and Roche-Hawley, "Scribal Culture of Ugarit," 229–267; and John L. Ellison, "The Scribal Art at Ugarit," in *Epigraphy, Philology, and the Hebrew Bible: Methodological Perspectives on Philological and Comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of Jo Ann Hackett*, ed. Jeremy M. Hutton and Aaron D. Rubin, ANEM 12 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 157–190.

11 For the variety of languages, see Philip J. Boyes, *Script and Society: The Social Context of Writing Practices in Late Bronze Age Ugarit* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2021), 197–224. On the Akkadian texts, see Wilfred van Soldt, "The Syllabic Akkadian Texts," in Watson and Wyatt,

The religious texts recovered from the archives of Ugarit are written in several languages and were found in various locations. Religious texts in Akkadian come mainly from archives in private houses that also contained lexical and other school texts.[12] The Hurrian religious texts, most of which were found in the house of the Hurrian priest, include paramythological texts, cultic texts, and liver and lung models describing extispicy rituals.[13] The religious texts in Ugaritic, many of which were found in the house of the great priest (*rb khnm*), include mythological texts, epics, and ritual texts, including offering and deity lists, and incantations and omen texts.[14] Letters, legal texts, economic texts, seal and other inscriptions, and a few other texts in both Akkadian and Ugaritic occasionally mention deities or other information relevant to religion at Ugarit as well.[15] The texts in Ugaritic are sometimes claimed to be most clearly representative of local practices at Ugarit, but the other sources also contain valuable information, and should not be overlooked.[16]

2 Objects, Qualities, and Attributes as Deities in Ritual Texts from Ugarit

This section analyzes the objects, qualities, and attributes that are treated as deities in ritual texts from Ugarit, focusing mainly on texts in alphabetic

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Handbook of Ugaritic Studies, 28–45; and van Soldt, *Studies in the Akkadian of Ugarit: Dating and Grammar*, AOAT 40 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1991). On the Hurrian and Hittite texts, see Manfried Dietrich and Walter Mayer, "The Hurrian and Hittite Texts," in Watson and Wyatt, *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*, 58–75. The alphabetic cuneiform texts from Ugarit are published in *KTU*. Texts in Ugaritic are cited here according to excavation number, with *KTU* numbers in parentheses or footnotes.

12 Van Soldt, "Syllabic Akkadian Texts," 39, 42.

13 Wayne Pitard, "The Alphabetic Ugaritic Tablets," in Watson and Wyatt, *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*, 51; Dietrich and Mayer, "Hurrian and Hittite Texts," 58–62.

14 On the contents and function of the great priest's archive, see Gregorio del Olmo Lete, *The Private Archives of Ugarit: A Functional Analysis*, Barcino monographica orientalia 11 (Barcelona: Edicions de la Universitat de Barcelona, 2018), 13–26; Pitard, "Alphabetic Ugaritic Tablets," 52–55. Dennis Pardee offers editions of the ritual texts, with the exception of very small fragments. Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, ed. Theodore J. Lewis, WAW 10 (Altanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002). See also David M. Clemens, *Sources for Ugaritic Ritual and Sacrifice*, vol. 1, *Ugaritic and Ugarit Akkadian Texts*, AOAT 284.1 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2000).

15 Clemens, *Sources for Ugaritic Ritual and Sacrifice*, 138–139, 140–141.

16 See the discussion in Clemens, 578–605.

Ugaritic and their corresponding Akkadian versions. The most well-known examples of deified objects from Ugarit are Censer (Ugaritic *ủṯḫt*; Akkadian $^{d.dug}$BUR.ZI.NÍG.NA) and Lyre (Ugaritic *knr*; Akkadian $^{d.giš}$*ki-na-rù*), which appear in various lists of deities that outline the recipients of offerings associated with specific sacrificial rituals.[17] One of these lists is represented by four very similar versions or copies, which perhaps served as memorandums for liturgical use by different officiants,[18] or as "checklists" for the performance of sacrificial rituals.[19] Three of the versions are in Ugaritic (RS 1.017, RS 24.264+, RS 24.643:1–9) and one is in Akkadian (RS 20.024).[20] The context evinced by lines 1–9 of RS 24.643 suggests that this list was associated with sacrificial offerings during the festival of *Ṣapunu*.[21] According to Dennis Pardee, because the lists of entities in the other three versions are essentially the same as the list of entities receiving sacrifices in RS 24.643:1–9, the other versions are probably "abstracted from the sacrificial text."[22]

The list of deities found in RS 1.017, RS 24.264+, RS 20.024, and RS 24.643:1–9 is composed of approximately thirty-three entries, with the different versions of the text exhibiting only slight variations in contents and order. The lines containing the relevant entries (*ủṯḫt* and *knr*) are reproduced below:[23]

RS 1.017
(31) *ủṯḫt*
(32) *knr*
RS 24.264+
(30) *ủṯḫ*⌜*t*⌝
(31) *knr*

17 For the etymology of these terms, see Dennis Pardee, *Les textes rituels*, RSO 12 (Paris: Editions recherche sur les civilisations, 2000), 310–311.

18 See Gregorio del Olmo Lete, *Private Archives of Ugarit*, 19.

19 RS 24.264+ and RS 20.024 both display "check marks" in the margins. See the copy in Pardee, *Les textes ritual*, 1284. See also Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 12–13. However, as del Olmo Lete points out, these lists "also undoubtably had a meaning transcending their practical use … suggested by the number of copies that were made and their translation into Akkadian" ("Offering Lists and the God Lists," 307).

20 RS 1.017 = *KTU* 1.47, RS 24.264+ = *KTU* 1.118, RS 24.643:1–9 = *KTU* 1.148. The copies of the list are conveniently juxtaposed in parallel columns as "Text 1" in Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 14–16; and as "List A" in del Olmo Lete, "Offering Lists and the God Lists," 308–310.

21 Del Olmo Lete, "Offering Lists and the God Lists," 308.

22 Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 12–13. Note, however, that the order of deities is slightly different in RS 24.264+ as compared to RS 24.643:1–12. See also Pardee, *Les textes rituels*, 291–319.

23 Following Pardee's reconstruction of the texts (*Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 14–16, 46).

RS 20.024
(30) $^{d.dug}$BUR.ZI.NÍG.NA
(31) $^{d.giš}$*ki-na-rù*
RS 24.643
(9) *pḫr . ilm . š . ym . š .* [*k*]⌜*n*⌝*r . š .* ⌜*ál*⌝*pm . ṣrm* [.] *gdlt* ⌜*š*⌝[*rp*]

In the three versions of the list that do not explicitly mention sacrifices, *ụṯḫt* and *knr* occur as the fourth and third-to-last entries respectively and are followed by *mlkm* (Akkadian ^{d}*ma-lik*-MEŠ), the deified deceased kings, and *šlm* (Akkadian ^{d}*sa-li-mu*).[24] In RS 24.643 *knr* is the last entry in the list of deities in lines 1–9. In this text, *ụṯḫt*, *mlkm*, and *šlm* are not explicitly mentioned, but it has been suggested that the sacrifices without specified recipients at the end of line 9 may have been intended for these three entities, since they appear in the other lists.[25]

The Ugaritic term *ụṯḫt* does not occur as a common noun in the texts from Ugarit, though censers are present in the archeological record.[26] The translation "Censer" is based on the term used in the Akkadian version of the list (RS 20.024:30), as well as the correspondence with Hurrian *aḫrušḫi* "censer" in Hurrian texts.[27] On the other hand, the term *knr* occurs outside the lists as a common noun several times: a *knr* is played by ʿAnatu for Baʾlu according to a hymn (RS 24.245 = *KTU* 1.101:16–19), and a *knr* is also associated with this goddess in the Legend of ʾAqhatu (RS 3.322 + 3.349 + 3.366 = *KTU* 1.19:7–8).[28] Moreover, a lyre appears in line 4 of a divine drinking rite and blessing (RS 24.252 =

24 Šalimu is the last deity to appear in several lists. Pardee suggests that he is "the youngest of *ʾIlu*'s sons, borne by a wife other than *ʾAṯiratu*, indeed one who was human rather than divine" (*Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 283).

25 Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 102–103n38.

26 Different types of censers have been discovered at Ugarit, including a ladle-shaped vessel of faience and an incense lamp made of clay that could be hung on a wall. See Kjeld Nielsen, *Incense in Ancient Israel*, VTSup 38 (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 29, 38–39.

27 See *CAD* N. 2, s.v. "nignakku"; and *CAD* Š.2, s.v. "šēḫtu." The logogram appears to combine *pursītu* "bowl" and *šēḫtu* "censer." The Ugaritic term was considered by Jean Nougayrol to be the equivalent of *šēḫtu*. Nougayrol, *Ugaritica v: Nouveaux textes accadiens, hourrites et ugaritiques des archives et bibliothèques privées d'Ugarit*, MRS 16 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1968), 58. However, Wilfred G.E. Watson suggests that *ụṯḫt* should be understood as "bowl for sacrifice," comparing it to the Nuzi term *ašḫušḫu*. Watson, "Ugaritic Terms for Containers in the Light of Comparative Semitics," in *Dialectology of the Semitic Languages: Proceedings of the IV Meeting on Comparative Semitics, Zaragoza 11/6–9/2010*, ed. Federico Corriente et al., AuOrSup 27 (Barcelona: Ausa, 2012), 83. For the Hurrian, see Pardee, *Les textes rituels*, 310 and n115.

28 It has been suggested that *knr* specifically designates a "thin" type of lyre (as opposed to the "thick" type). See Bo Lawergren, "Distinctions among Canaanite, Philistine, and Israelite

KTU 1.108:4). In the latter text, *knr* is one of several musical instruments played by the god Rāpi'u. In mythological texts from Ugarit, the lyre thus appears to have been associated with various deities as a special possession, as a divine musical instrument played on important occasions. This term also appears in texts from elsewhere in the ancient Near East, including Mesopotamia, Ebla, Emar, and Alalakh.[29]

The orthography of $^{d.dug}$BUR.ZI.NÍG.NA and $^{d.giš}$*ki-na-rù* in the Akkadian version of the list (RS 20.24) is noteworthy. Here, these entities are labeled with two determinatives each, with both the divine determinative and the determinative appropriate to their status as material objects. The second determinative, DUG, used in $^{d.dug}$BUR.ZI.NÍG.NA typically indicates a vessel; the second determinative used in $^{d.giš}$*ki-na-rù* often indicates an object made of wood, metal, or other hard materials. The use of two determinatives for each word is unusual, though not unprecedented.[30] The use of both determinatives emphasizes that these entities were classified as both objects and deities simultaneously. As for the logographic writing $^{d.dug}$BUR.ZI.NÍG.NA, an unusual writing that combines BUR.ZI (Akkadian *pursītu*, "cultic container"), with NÍG.NA (Akkadian *nignakku*, "censer"), and the syllabic writing $^{d.giš}$*ki-na-rù*, which is apparently a transcription of Ugaritic *knr*, it is quite possible that these writings indicate that the scribe is emphasizing the local character of these objects. As Pardee suggests, "Cette transcription, aussi bien que le logogramme insolite DUG.BUR.ZI.NÍG.NA … s'il s'agit là d'une précision qui a un sens local et non d'un fragment d'érudition mésopotamienne."[31]

Lyres, and Their Global Lyrical Contexts," *BASOR* 309 (1998): 59, https://doi.org/10.2307/1357602.

29 This term appears in the Early Dynastic Practical Vocabulary B_2 from ED Mesopotamia (written *gi-na-ru*$_{12}$); it also appears in later lexical texts. At Ebla, it is associated with balaĝ in the Ebla Vocabulary (written *gi-na-ru*$_{12}$*-um*, *gi-na-rúm*, *gin-na-lum*). It also appears as *ki-in-na-ra-tim* at Mari in a letter to the king reporting on an order for five lyres (ARM 13, 20:5, 7, 11, 16), as well as several texts concerning materials for the construction of lyres (ARM 23, 180:12; ARM 25, 547:9; ARM 21, 298:16, 20). Moreover, the term *ki-in-na-ru* is attested in a lexical list at Emar (Emar 545:392′), and the term *ki-in-na-ru-ḫu-li* ("lyrist") with the Hurrian agentive suffix occurs in *AT* 172 at Alalakh. In addition, *kinnōr* is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible more than forty times, where it clearly designates a type of lyre. See Heimpel, "Balang-Gods," 600; and Franklin, *Kinyras*, 43, 54, 63, 76, 78, 98.

30 At Ebla, City may be marked with both the divine determinative and the determinative for a locale, at least in one text (see ch. 3).

31 Pardee, *Les textes rituels*, 310. He also notes that it is possible that the Akkadian transcription of *knr* may indicate that "le scribe a pu vouloir dire sans l'ombre d'un doute qu'il ne s'agit pas simplement de la lyre divinisée, mais de la divinité *Kinnāru*, celle que nous connaissons, à partir des sources grecques à Chypre, comme Kinyras."

This and other, similar lists from Ugarit have been shown to correspond to specific sacrificial rituals. Thus, rather than being complete listings of the entire pantheon at Ugarit, these lists represent a selection of deities who received particular sacrifices at particular times.[32] However, previous studies of this list have only briefly touched on the meaning of these intriguing entries. Pardee describes *ữṯḫt* and *knr* as "deux théonymes qui reflètent sûrement la divinisation d'instruments cultuels."[33] His discussion of these entities mostly concentrates on their etymology. Gregorio del Olmo Lete argues that the final group of entries in the list, including *ữṯḫt* and *knr*, is "somewhat of an appendix and possibly contains later additions. In it is developed the process of 'divinizing' objects and persons."[34] However, he does not reveal his reasons for making the claim that these entries are "later additions," or elaborate on what he means by "divinizing," or why he places this word in scare-quotes.

What do these texts indicate about the place of these objects in the Ugaritic pantheon? According to RS 24.643:1–9, which describes the sacrifices allotted to the same entities listed in RS 1.017, RS 24.264+, and RS 20.024, *knr* receives an offering of one ram (*š*) in the *Ṣapunu* festival (*dbḥ ṣpn*), as do most of the other entities in the list. Only the four entities at the beginning of the list receive a larger allotment: each entity in the first four lines of the list (*ỉlib*, *ỉl*, *dgn*, and *bʿl ṣpn*) receives an ox and a ram (*alp w š*).[35] Though a sacrifice for *ữṯḫt* is not mentioned in RS 24.643:1–9 (*mlkm* and *šlm* are also absent), the three sacrifices at the end of line 9 not overtly connected with any specific deities may be intended for these three entities.[36] If this is correct, then *ữṯḫt* receives two oxen in this text, and is the only entity to receive this particular offering.

The placement of these two entities near the end of the list may indicate that they were considered somewhat less important than those earlier in the list: the overall order seems to indicate that the most important deities were listed first. In addition, as noted above, the first four deities listed receive a larger sacrifice in RS 24.643:1–9, comprising two different animals.[37] However, at least in terms

32 Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 11–12; Pardee, *Les textes rituels*, 779–806.

33 Pardee, *Les textes rituels*, 310.

34 Del Olmo Lete, "Offering Lists and the God Lists," 310.

35 According to the reconstruction offered by Dennis Pardee, "RS 24.643: Texte et structure," *Syria* 69 (1992): 160–162, https://doi.org/10.3406/syria.1992.7269.

36 See Pardee's hypothesis ("RS 24.643," 162–163). Pardee offers the following possible interpretation: "(pour ʾUṮḤṬ) deux boeufs, (pour les *Malikūma*) deux oiseaux, (pour *Šalimu*) une vache" (168). See also Pardee, *Les textes rituels*, 779–806.

37 Pardee describes the order as follows: "*Grosso modo* … les dieux sont nommés par ordre d'importance" (*Les textes rituels*, 315). Though it does seem that the most important entities are listed first, the exact order of most of the list is unclear, as scholars have noted.

of the quantity and type of offerings recorded in this text, *knr* clearly receives an offering equal to most of the other deities listed; and, if Pardee's theory concerning the last few offerings mentioned in RS 24.643:9 is correct, then *ữṯḫt* may even receive a larger, unique offering. Evidently, these deities were considered to appreciate such sacrificial offerings.

The entries *ữṯḫt* and *knr* may appear in another document containing a list of deities who are the recipients of blood sacrifices, represented by the damaged text of RS 24.643:23–45 (verso of RS 24.643:1–9), which has parallels in the Akkadian text RS 92.2004 and the badly damaged RS 26.142. The text RS 24.643:23–45 lists the "gods of the (month) *Ḥiyyāru*" (*il ḫyr*).[38] It presents a somewhat different list of entities than the lists discussed above.[39] In RS 92.2004 and RS 26.142, which seem to be Akkadian versions of the same list of deities that receive sacrifices in RS 24.643:23–45, Censer ($^{d.dug}$BUR.ZI.NÍG.DIN) and Lyre ($^{d.giš}$ZA.MÍM), both written logographically, occur near the end of the list (RS 92.2004:36–37 and RS 26.142:18′–19′). Both are again written with two determinatives: the divine determinative and the determinative denoting a vessel and a material object, respectively.[40] According to RS 24.643:23–45, most of the deities in this list receive an identical sacrifice of one ram, though a few entries at the beginning and end of the list receive an ox as well: Baʿlu of Aleppo, Baʿlu of Ṣapunu, Ṯarraṯiya, and four manifestations of Baʿlu.[41] Unfortunately, the text in Ugaritic is damaged at the point where Censer and Lyre would occur if they were present. Based on the evidence of the Akkadian versions, Pardee interprets the relevant portion of line 43 of RS 24.643 as follows: "(pour) *ʾU*[*ṯḫatu* (un) bélier, ([pour] *Kinnāru* (un) bélier)."[42] If his reconstruction is correct, *ữṯḫt* and *knr* receive the smaller allotment of one ram each common

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Del Olmo Lete writes that "the hierarchical principle governing the composition of this 'god list' is not clear; they do not seem to be arranged according to 'personal' importance" ("Offering Lists and the God Lists," 310).

38 RS 24.643:23–45 = *KTU* 1.148. The text is vocalized by Pardee, *Les textes rituels*, 787. Pardee suggests that this ritual is connected with the lunar cycle (*Les textes rituels*, 797–798), while del Olmo Lete connects this text with the funerary cult ("Offering Lists and the God Lists," 312).

39 This list presents many of the same entities found in RS 1.017 (discussed above), but often in a different order. See the side-by-side comparison in Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 17–18.

40 This transliteration, with two determinatives, differs slightly from del Olmo Lete and Pardee.

41 See Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 49 and n. 46. On the manifestations of Baʿal, see ch. 5 in Allen, *Splintered Divine*.

42 Based on Pardee's reconstruction of this line as [*dd*]^{r}*m*^{1} *š*. *il lb*[-]^{r}*n*^{1} *š*^{r}. *ữ*^{1}[*ṯḫt*. *š*. (*knr*. *š*.) *bʿlm*] (*Les textes rituels*, 784–788).

to most of the deities in the list. Again, as in the list discussed above, these two entities would occur near the end of the list, but not as the final entries. However, it should be noted that it is not certain to what extent RS 26.142 and RS 92.2004 can be used to reconstruct the missing or damaged parts of RS 24.643:23–45. For example, the Ugaritic version of the list appears to have a slightly different order than the Akkadian version in RS 92.2004.[43]

The same list that seems to be represented by RS 26.142, RS 92.2004, and RS 24.643:23–45 may contain a third entry of interest: Doorbolt. Though the Ugaritic version of the list is badly damaged at the point where this entry would appear, the Akkadian version suggests that this deity is also included in the list. RS 26.142:15 has Doorbolt (GIŠ.SAG.KUL), leading Pardee to reconstruct the latter part of line 42 in RS 24.643 as "for Doorbolt a ram," though the Ugaritic is too damaged to read here.[44] Pardee thus includes Doorbolt as an entry in his index of deities in the ritual texts.[45] If this reconstruction is correct, then Doorbolt receives one ram in the month of *Ḥiyyāru*, just like Lyre and Censer, and most of the other deities in the list. Doorbolt's position in the list is near the end, but it precedes both Censer and Lyre, as well as several deities associated with particular locations, and several manifestations of Baʿlu. However, the last several entries in the list, those for the manifestations of Baʿlu, receive the larger offering of both a bull and a ram, so the ordering of this list may not strictly indicate descending importance (RS 24.643:43–45).

Two additional texts may attest cultic attention directed toward a temple or sanctuary: RS 24.249 and RS 24.261.[46] The text RS 24.249, a prescriptive sacrificial ritual that describes sacrifices for the month of *Ỉbʿalatu* and/or *Ḥiyyāru*, includes an offering destined for "the Temple of Baʿlu" (*bt . bʿl . ugrt . ṯn šm*).[47] This line can be interpreted in two ways. It may designate where the sacrifice of two rams occurs: "(in) the temple of Baʿlu of Ugarit: two rams." Or, it may

43 See Pardee's comments on the difficulty of using the syllabic texts to reconstruct the alphabetic text in this case ("RS 24.643," 166–167; and *Les textes rituels*, 785). There is little evidence on the tablet of RS 24.643:23–45 (*KTU* 1.148) that supports the reconstruction of these entries, since the tablet is quite damaged at this point. Based on his analysis of the two partially visible signs, Pardee doubts that *knr* should be reconstructed for RS 24.643:38 (*contra KTU*). Instead, he reconstructs *ugṯt* and *knr* in line 43.

44 For GIŠ.SAG.KUL, see *CAD* S, s.v. "sikkūru." See Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 49 and n. 45. Pardee bases this on Arnaud's edition of RS 26.142. RS 92.2004 has no corresponding entry. See also del Olmo Lete "The Offering Lists and the God Lists," 311.

45 Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 277–278.

46 RS 24.249 = *KTU* 1.105; RS 24.261 = *KTU* 1.116.

47 Mount Saphon, Baʿlu's abode, also receives a sacrifice of one bird (*ʿṣr l ṣpn*) in the same text (RS 24.249:24′), as noted previously by Olyan, *Thousand Thousands Served Him*, 97.

describe/prescribe a sacrifice for the Temple of Baʿlu: "(for) the Temple of Baʿlu of Ugarit, two rams." Pardee interprets it the former way, in parallel with other locational designations for sacrifices in the text, such as "in the sacrificial pit of *Ḥiyyāru*" (*b ǵb ḫyr*) in line 3′.[48] However, Olyan interprets it the latter way, in parallel with the sacrifices for other gods, such as "for *Kôṯaru*, two" (*l kṯr. ṯn*) in line 12′.[49] Unfortunately, both of these interpretations require supplying a preposition (*b* or *l*) that is not present in the text, so either reading must remain speculative. Another such entity appears in RS 24.261, which is a sacrificial ritual centered on ʿAthtartu. In line 6 of this text, *ḫmn* is included among the list of gods who are the recipients of an unspecified sacrifice. Though it may be a circumlocution for a god associated with the *ḫmn*-sanctuary, it could indicate that *ḫmn* itself is deified.[50] This would not be surprising, given the tendency elsewhere in the ancient Near East to treat temples and their constituent parts as deities.

A number of tools or weapons and qualities or attributes belonging to ʾIlu seem to be treated as deities in RS 4.474:12–18, which may constitute "a list of divinized implements."[51] The first eleven lines of this text list a number of deities related to ʾIlu, including some divine qualities belonging to this god, to which the discussion returns below. The second half of the text, found on the reverse of the tablet, reads as follows:[52]

(12) *b mrḫ ỉl*	by ʾIlu's Blade,
(13) *b nỉt ỉl*	by ʾIlu's Axe,
(14) *b ṣmd ỉl*	by ʾIlu's Yoke,
(15) *b dṯn ỉl*	by ʾIlu's Crusher,
(16) *b šrp ỉl*	by ʾIlu's Fire,
(17) *b knt ỉl*	by ʾIlu's Foundation,
(18) *b ǵdyn* ⌜ *ỉ*⌝*l*	by ʾIlu's Care,
(19) ⌜*b*⌝*n* ⌜ *ỉl*⌝	did ʾIlu build.[53]

48 Pardee, *Les textes rituels*, 577.

49 Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 43; Olyan, *Thousand Thousands Served Him*, 97.

50 See also Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 95, 279. Pardee notes that the term *ḫmn* "has been identified in recent years as designating an architectural entity, but its precise nature and function are still unknown." See also Pardee, *Les textes rituels*, 654, 657: "le divin *ḫmn* est (1) le lieu sacré divinisé … ou (2) le mont *ḫmn*, l'Amanus, divinisé." Either way, it seems that this term designates a divinized locale.

51 Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 22.

52 Modified slightly from Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 23.

53 Pardee notes that the translation of line 19 is debatable: "The problems of this translation must be stressed: the reading of the line is uncertain, and the writing of a III-Y verb with-

As Pardee notes, each of these tools/qualities of ʾIlu is "specifically presented as agential by the prefixed preposition *b*, here interpreted as instrumental ('by')."[54] If the final line of the text is best understood to mean that ʾIlu constructed the deities in lines 1–11 with the help of these tools as fellow agents of creation, these entities may be characterized as deities; on the other hand, the text may simply be stating that these are the instruments by means of which ʾIlu accomplished his creation of the deities mentioned in lines 1–11. If the last line of the text is understood as summing up the contents of the list with the phrase, "sons of ʾIlu," then it is possible that each entity named in lines 1–18 is one of these sons. However, this translation doesn't make much sense out of the preposition *b* in the second half of the text.[55] Furthermore, several of the deities listed in lines 1–11 do not seem to fit into the classification of children of ʾIlu: ʾIlu himself is mentioned at least twice in the text, once paired with ʾAṯiratu as his consort.[56] It seems clear, however the last line is interpreted, that some sort of agency is being attributed to the implements of ʾIlu in this text through the use of the preposition *b*, and that these entities are functioning in roles similar to that of ʾIlu as creator. However, the degree of independence from ʾIlu they were thought to have is impossible to determine.

The obverse of RS 4.474, lines 1–11, mentioned above, also contains a number of interesting entries in its list of deities related to ʾIlu. This list of gods begins with ʾIlu (*il*), and also includes his sons (*bn il*), the "circle" of his sons (*dr bn il*), the "assembly" of his sons (*mpḫrt bn il*), and ʾIlu and ʾAṯiratu (*il w aṯrt*).[57] Lines 6–8, however, contain some particularly interesting entries:

(6) *ḥnn il* Benevolence of ʾIlu
(7) *nṣbt il* Predilection/Solidity of ʾIlu
(8) *šlm il* Prosperity/Well-being of ʾIlu

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out {y} is not, though attested, common" (*Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 24n19). An alternative translation is "sons of ʾIlu."

54 Pardee, *Ritual and Cult*, 22–23.

55 See Pardee, *Ritual and Cult*, 22: "The function of this second list is obscured by the uncertain reading of line 19 and, if the reading proposed be correct, by the ambiguity of the word *bn*: does it mean 'sons of' or 'he built'? In the former case, this would be the first attestation at Ugarit of a list of divinized implements, and the function of the prepositional formulation would be unclear; in the latter, the text may constitute one of the first specific references to ʾIlu as creator (cf. one of his titles in the mythological texts, *bny bnwt*, literally 'he who builds descendants,' usually taken as designating him as father of the gods)."

56 As Pardee remarks, however, this would be "the only mention of the couple as such in the ritual texts" (*Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 22).

57 The transliteration and translation of RS 4.474:1–11 in this section follow the suggestions of Pardee, *Ritual and Cult*, 22–23, with some modifications.

These entries are followed by "solicitous ʾIlu, active ʾIlu, Baʿlu of Ṣapunu, Baʿlu of Ugarit" (*il ḫš il* ⌜*n*⌝*dd bʿ*? *ṣpn bʿl ủgrt*) in lines 9–11. Pardee interprets the entities named in lines 6–9 as "hypostases of ʾIlu in which his beneficence is stressed … expressed as abstractions."[58] Though the latter two seem to be manifestations of ʾIlu, rather than qualities of ʾIlu characterized as gods, the first three qualities possessed by ʾIlu do seem to be characterized as deities. All of the entities mentioned in lines 1–11 seem to be the product of ʾIlu's creative efforts, based on line 19 of the text. The fact that the text lists these qualities of ʾIlu alongside ʾIlu himself and his children certainly seems to characterize these attributes as divine.

A number of divine qualities and attributes also appear in two other ritual texts from Ugarit: RS 24.271 and RS 24.252. The text RS 24.271 appears to be a prayer. The text, as partially reconstructed by Pardee, begins with a request for a blessing of well-being directed toward the gods ([*šlm*] *ảb . w il*⌜*m*⌝[…]).[59] According to Pardee, "The interpretation of *šlm* (in lines 1–3 and 28′–33′) that presents the fewest difficulties is … as a series of imperatives addressed to the gods named; by implication all the gods named in the intervening lines would be objects of the same request for blessing."[60] The list of deities invoked by this request begins with ʾIlu, and includes Dagan, Baʿlu, and a number of other gods well-known from the Ugaritic texts. However, the list of deities from whom the blessing is requested also includes some additional, intriguing entities.[61] These enigmatic entries are followed by a return to the formula requesting well-being. It seems relatively clear that all the entities listed have the capacity to function in roles appropriate to deities by bestowing blessings and responding to prayer.

Though any interpretations hazarded concerning the entries in these lines must remain tentative, and the tablet is damaged, it is probable that some of these entries are divine qualities or attributes treated as deities. For example, *ngh*, which appears in line 12, may be understood as "Brightness."[62] Perhaps a clearer case is the entry in line 21 on the reverse of the tablet, which seems to designate a quality or attribute possessed by ʾIlu: "Splendour/Glory of ʾIlu" (*kbd d il*). Also occurring in this list of deities are "Justice and Rectitude" (*ṣdq mšr*) paired together in line 14, and "Holiness" (*qdš*) in lines 20′ and 26′.[63] It is

58 Pardee, 22; Pardee, *Les textes rituels*, 368, 370–371.

59 Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 151.

60 Pardee, 150.

61 Transliterations of these entries follow Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 151–152. He does not offer translations/interpretations for most of these entries.

62 Pardee notes that it is "probably from the Semitic root NGH that denotes 'brightness'" (*Ritual and Cult*, 282.)

63 Pardee points of that "*Qudšu*" (*qdš*) occurs alongside *ʿAmrur* in line 26′, noting that the

possible that some of the other unknown entities in the list should be interpreted similarly. Unfortunately, the text provides no information concerning the form in which these deities were imagined: whether they are epithets of gods, names of gods imagined in humanlike form, or divine qualities characterized as deities. However, it is clear that they were conceptualized in this case as agents capable of hearing and responding favorably to prayer.

One other text that may contain evidence of the treatment of divine qualities or attributes as deities is RS 24.252. This text has been interpreted as a "divine drinking rite": "it appears to be an invitation to the deities invoked to join in a feast at which *Rāpiʾu*, the first deity named, is described as requesting of *Baʿlu* that he transmit the powers of the *Rapaʾūma* to the living king."[64] In lines 21–23, a number of qualities and attributes of Rāpiʾu are invoked to provide success to the new king:

rpỉ mlk (20′) [*ʿlm . ymġy*]*k* .	Rāpiʾu, king of eternity will bring you
l tštk . l ỉršt (21′) [*k*]	To your success, to what you have requested,
[*b yd* .]*rpỉ . mlk ʿlm* .	By the Power of Rāpiʾu, king of eternity,
b ʿz (22′) [*rpỉ* .] ⌜*m*⌝*lk . ʿlm* .	By the Strength of Rāpiʾu, king of eternity,
b ḏmrh . b l (23′) [*ảnh*] .	By his Protection, by his Power,
b ḫtkh . b nmrth .	By his Sovereignty, by his Splendor.[65]

In these lines, as in RS 4.474:12–18, the preposition *b* seems to denote agency: These six qualities and attributes of Rāpiʾu function as divine agents in this text insofar as they have the capacity to grant success to the king. However, as in RS 4.474:12–18, the preposition might also be designating these entities as instruments by which Rāpiʾu accomplishes the blessing, in which case they may not be attributed any independent agency.

A few additional divine qualities and divine attributes that do not appear to be characterized as deities in any other extant texts from Ugarit occur in theophoric position in personal names. For example, a few Ugaritic names

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pair serve as messengers in the literary texts (*Ritual and Cult*, 282). In these texts, the pair is thus described as humanlike in form. Pardee renders *ṣdq mšr* paired together in line 14 as a binomial, "*Ṣidqu, Mêšaru*" (*Ritual and Cult*, 151), though he also points out the connection of these words with the common nouns meaning "righteousness" and "rectitude, uprightness" (281). The noun *mšr* occurs in RS 1.002 as a common noun.

64 Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 192–193. Pardee speculates that the rite may have been part of the accession of Ammurapi. He suggests that Rāpiʾu, a god not attested elsewhere in the Ugaritic texts, is a title of Milku, "designating him as head of the *Rapaʾūma*" (204–205 and n. 6).

65 Slightly modified from Pardee, 194–195.

include the theophoric element *gṯr* ("Strong").[66] Among the names of this type found at Ugarit is *ʿbdgṯr* ("Servant of Strength").[67] Again, it is not entirely clear whether an entity such as *gṯr* occurring as a theophoric element is a deified quality or an epithet of a god used instead of his proper name, or perhaps even a proper name of a god that is etymologically related to "strength." For example, Frauke Gröndahl suggests that *gṯr* is actually a "Beiname des Baʿal,"[68] while Pardee identifies this entity, occurring in the ritual texts, as a "chthonic deity of vegetation and warfare," one member of the enigmatic group of gods called the *Gaṯarāma* or *Gaṯarūma*.[69] Alternatively this may be an eponym for the dead or deified kings.[70]

3 Observations on the Evidence from Ugarit

In sum, a number of objects, as well as some qualities and attributes, are treated as deities in the ritual texts from Ugarit. Censer, Lyre, and Doorbolt receive offerings, indicating that they were thought of as appreciating and potentially able to respond reciprocally to sacrifices. These objects were possessions of important gods in the pantheon, pieces of cultic equipment, or parts or accoutrements of temples. The temple of Baʿlu and the *ḫmn*-sanctuary may also receive offerings, depending on the interpretation of the texts in which they appear.

More difficult to interpret are the qualities and attributes of the major gods ʾIlu and Rāpiʾu that appear as divine agents in the texts. The tools or weapons and one quality or attribute belonging to ʾIlu in RS 4.474 may be interpreted as sons of ʾIlu who are independent agents that assist him in his creation of the other deities, or simply the tools with which ʾIlu accomplishes his work. Similarly, it is unclear whether the qualities and attributes of Rāpiʾu that are called upon to bless the new king in RS 4.474 are best interpreted as independent agents capable of bestowing blessing, or as attributes of Rāpiʾu that assist him in accomplishing the blessing, but have no independence.

66 Frauke Gröndahl, *Die Personennamen der Texte aus Ugarit*, StPohl 1 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967), 78–85.

67 See Gröndahl, *Die Personennamen Personennamen der Texte aus Ugarit*, 104, 105, 130.

68 Gröndahl, 79.

69 Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 278. Gaṯaru (*gṯr*) also appears as the recipient of one shekel of silver in RS.1005:11–12, and two shekels of silver later in the same text, and may also appear among the list of deities receiving a sacrifice of one ram each in RS 24.643:38 (See Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 49 and n. 42, 70–71).

70 Gregorio del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*, 3rd rev. ed., 2 vols., HdO 112 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 310.

The qualities or attributes that appear in the list of gods in the prayer in RS 24.271 may be interpreted as epithets of gods, proper names of gods that are etymologically related to common nouns describing qualities, or qualities and attributes that are considered to be independent deities. Finally, the evidence from personal names does not provide enough information to establish if the qualities used as theophoric elements in anthroponyms were considered to be the proper names of independent deities with nonhuman forms.

Overall, these entities appear less frequently than many other gods in the pantheon attested at Ugarit. For example, Pardee estimates that 234 different gods are named in the ritual texts, 178 of which are the recipients of offerings. Almost 50 of these gods are listed as the recipients of offerings ten times or more: for example, Baʿlu and his manifestations receive a combined total of at least 561 offerings, and ʾIlu receives 60.[71] By comparison, Censer, Lyre, Doorbolt, Temple of Baʿlu, and *ḫmn*-sanctuary each receives only one or two sacrifices on specific occasions; no qualities or attributes receive offerings in these texts. This indicates a lack of relative importance within the sphere of officially sanctioned ritual practice as a whole; however, the presence of objects such as Censer and Lyre in texts that were produced in multiple copies, and in both Ugaritic and Akkadian, indicates that they were recipients of offerings in rituals of some importance.

71 Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 222–224.

CHAPTER 7

First Millennium Inscriptions

The last few chapters investigated texts from ancient Mesopotamia and several important third and second millennium sites in Syria in which objects, qualities, and attributes are treated as deities. As these chapters demonstrate, deified objects, qualities, and attributes are attested in Sumerian, Akkadian, Eblaite, and Ugaritic sources from the third through the second millennium and beyond. Records of offerings devoted to these deities imply that they were conceptualized as agents capable of recognizing and responding to them. This chapter continues this investigation by examining a selection of first millennium inscriptions in Northwest Semitic languages. It concludes with a brief excursus discussing two Levantine deities that appear in a Neo-Assyrian treaty in Akkadian.

Unlike the extensive documentary evidence from Mesopotamia and the substantial archives from the sites in Syria discussed in previous chapters, epigraphic data from the Levant in the first millennium are generally much more scattered. The extant texts provide limited information about religious beliefs and practices; frequently, deities appear in short inscriptions, or are briefly mentioned in longer inscriptions that focus primarily on other topics. Thus, while the corpus of West Semitic inscriptions from this period is substantial and represents a variety of genres, as well as languages and dialects, it does not tend to provide detailed descriptions of deities. Yet, a number of inscriptions contain the proper names of deities, often accompanied by their epithets, and theophoric anthroponyms also provide useful information. In addition to dedicatory or votive inscriptions, other texts, such as scribal exercises, administrative documents, or even graffiti, contain divine names. In addition, treaties from first millennium Assyria include not only lists of the deities of Neo-Assyrian kings, but also their vassals in the Levant, offering additional relevant examples.

1 The Evidence from Kuntillet ʿAjrud

Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Ḥorvat Teiman), an Iron Age II site on a hilltop in the northern Sinai, has yielded inscriptions dating to the late ninth or early eighth centuries that provide important extrabiblical sources concerning ancient Israelite reli-

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gion during the Iron Age (ca. 840–721 BCE).[1] The primary function of the site is debated, but some evidence suggests that it was a fortress built and maintained by the Northern Kingdom of Israel.[2] The connection to the Israelite state is adduced from the presence of theophoric names with *-yw*, references to YHWH of Samaria, pottery, and the Phoenician style of much of the script. Some of the inscriptions from the site may be relevant to this study, though it should be noted that in many cases any interpretation must remain tentative, due to the difficulty in reading the inscriptions, some of which are quite fragmentary.

For example, if this interpretation is correct, "Name of ʾEl" may be treated as a deity in an inscription in Phoenician script in black ink on a piece of plaster that had fallen from the wall near the bench-room of one of the buildings (KA 4.2).[3] This fragmentary text, which has been alternately categorized as Hebrew or Phoenician with respect to its language,[4] is sometimes characterized as a polytheistic hymn to ʾEl.[5] The five or six lines that remain of the inscription have been interpreted by the editors of the *editio princeps* as describing a divine conflict, ending with two lines concerning blessings directed toward two deities "on a day of war": Baʿal and the "Name of ʾEl" (*šm ʾl*).[6]

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1 Smoak and Schniedewind, "Religion at Kuntillet Ajrud," 1, 4. Nadav Naʾaman proposes that the site was built and occupied during the reign of Jeroboam II (786–746 BCE). Naʾaman, "The Inscriptions of Kuntillet ʿAjrud through the Lens of Historical Research," *UF* 43 (2011): 313.

2 For various opinions on the site's purpose, see Smoak and Schniedewind, "Religion at Kuntillet Ajrud," 1–18; Tallay Ornan, "The Drawings from Kuntillet Ajrud," in *To Yahweh Teiman and His Ashera, the Inscriptions and Drawings from Kuntillet Ajrud*, ed. Shmuel Aḥituv and Ester Eshel (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society; Yad Ben Zvi, 2015), 44–68 [Hebrew]; Schniedewind, "Understanding Scribal Education in Ancient Israel: A View from Kuntillet ʿAjrud," *Maarav* 21 (2014): 271–293, https://doi.org/10.1086/MAR20142118; Zeʾev Meshel, *Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Ḥorvat Teman): An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah-Sinai Border* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2012); and Nadav Naʾaman and Nurit Lissovsky, "Kuntillet ʿAjrud, Sacred Trees and the Asherah," *TA* 35, no. 2 (2008): 186–208, https://doi.org/10.1179/tav.2008.2008.2.186.

3 The Kuntillet ʿAjrud inscriptions are cited according to their publication in Aḥituv, Eshel, and Meshel, "Inscriptions," 73–142.

4 The editors of the *editio princeps* describe it as a Hebrew inscription in Phoenician script, but André Lemaire suggests that it is actually in Phoenician. Lemaire, "Remarques sur les inscriptions phéniciennes de Kuntillet ʿAjrud," *Sem* 55 (2013): 83–99. Erhard Blum also argues that it is Phoenician. Blum, "Die Wandinschriften 4.2 und 4.6 sowie die Pithos-Inschrift 3.9 aus Kuntillet ʿAǧrūd," *ZDPV* 129 (2013): 29.

5 See Ryan Thomas, "Eshem and Ashima: Gods of the 'Name,'" *WO* 52, no. 1 (2022): 25, https://doi.org/10.13109/wdor.2022.52.1.3.

6 Aḥituv, Eshel, and Meshel, "Inscriptions," 110, 114. However, see the alternative interpretation of these lines in Blum, "Die Wandinschriften 4.2 und 4.6 sowie die Pithos-Inschrift 3.9 aus Kuntillet ʿAǧrūd," 34. Blum reads Sam'al instead of Name of ʾEl here due to the lack of word divider, though he does not rule the latter out.

Shmuel Aḥituv, Esther Eshel, and Ze'ev Meshel argue that these lines indicate that Baʿal was considered a hypostasis of ʾEl/YHWH at Kuntillet ʿAjrud.[7] In other words, they understand these two lines as referring to Baʿal as the name of ʾEl/YHWH. Similarly, Naʾaman describes "Name of God" as "the hypostasis of the deity's entity, the embodiment of God in his name."[8] However, the concept of hypostasis they employ is deeply problematic, as discussed in chapter 1. In addition, the deity Baʿal is well-attested as an independent deity in West Semitic sources, and a reference to Baʿal's voice may appear elsewhere in the epigraphic evidence from Kuntillet ʿAjrud (KA 4.4).[9] Moreover, according to a recent reconstruction of KA 4.1, which Erhard Blum describes as a Hebrew (specifically Judean) inscription in Aramaic script, this inscription may also mention the "Name of YHWH," along with his Asherah. Blum suggests that the relevant portion can be translated: "may they be sated [with all good that] they may praise the name and the ashera of [Y]HWH [of the] south."[10] This would represent an example of Name of YHWH receiving treatment appropriate to a deity, namely praise, comparable to that directed to YHWH's Asherah.[11]

As the preceding chapters have shown, *Name* (*šm*) has a long history as a deity across the ancient Near East. That an entity referred to as the name of a deity could itself be considered a deity is demonstrated by the cases in which the goddess ʿAṯtartu is sometimes called "ʿAṯtartu, name of Baʿlu" (*ʿṯtrt šm bʿl*), though she is clearly an independent goddess.[12] In addition, the construct chain, "Name of ʾEl," appears elsewhere in the Levant as a theophoric element in personal names.[13] In this inscription, "Name of ʾEl" parallels the well-known

7 Aḥituv, Eshel and Meshel, "Inscriptions," 133.

8 Naʾaman, "Inscriptions of Kuntillet ʿAjrud through the Lens of Historical Research," 310. See also F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp et al., *Hebrew Inscriptions: Texts from the Biblical Period of the Monarchy with Concordance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 289.

9 According to the *editio princeps*. However, note that Lemaire reconstructs *pʿl* rather than *bʿl* in this short text ("Remarques sur les inscriptions phéniciennes de Kuntillet ʿAjrud," 92–93).

10 Erhard Blum, "Kuntillet ʿAjrud 4.1: New Reconstructions and Readings," *ErIsr* 34 (2021): 11*, 15*–16*. He reconstructs the latter portion of the line as *w*]*ytnw* . *lšm* [. *y*]*hwh* [. *h*]*tymn* . *wlʾšrth*.

11 Asherah is discussed further below.

12 See the references to "ʿAṯtartu, name of Baʿlu" (*ʿṯtrt šm bʿl l*) in the Kirta Epic and the Baʿlu Cycle from Ugarit (*KTU* 1.16.6:54–57 and *KTU* 1.2.1:7–8) and in a fifth century Phoenician inscription (*KAI* 14:18). See also Wilson-Wright, *Athtart*, 133–134.

13 For example, "Name of ʾEl" occurs as a theophoric element in an early second millennium personal name from Tuttul (Tell Biʾa) (*ḥanna-šumu-ʾila* "Gracious is Name of ʾIlu"), and as an epithet at Ugarit (*KTU* 1.22 I 6–7), as previously noted by Thomas, "Eshem and Ashima," 25–26. He suggests that this "construct epithet" indicates a "warrior profile" since

deity Baʿal, which may indicate that they are considered to occupy a common class.[14] Both are treated similarly, as deities to receive blessings in preparation for battle, in this invocation. The giving of blessings and praise implies the attribution of agency: presumably the Name desires and can respond favorably to such acts. Moreover, if the names of deities could be marshaled as incantations that could be deployed as weapons of war in West Semitic sources, as Theodore Lewis suggests, this may also signal that "Name of ʾEl" possesses agency—in this case, the ability to defeat enemies, equivalent to the military prowess of Baʿal.[15]

A few other inscriptions from this site may be relevant to the topic under discussion. The most famous inscriptions from Kuntillet ʿAjrud are the ones that appear on two pithoi, or storage jars, found in or near the bench-room in the western building at the site. The surfaces of both pithos A (KA 3.1) and pithos B (KA 3.6) have inscriptions in Hebrew. Though their precise meaning is still heavily debated, they may provide another example of the deification of cult objects in the Levant. The pithos A inscription includes a blessing "to/by YHWH of Samaria and to his Asherah" (*brkt ʾtkm lyhwh šmrn wlʾšrth*).[16] Pithos B boasts a longer text, with a blessing "to/by YHWH of Teman and to his Asherah" (*brktk lyhwh tmn wlʾšrth*).[17] YHWH of Teman and his Asherah also appear elsewhere on Pithos B (KA 3.9) and on a piece of wall plaster from the bench-room (KA 4.1). A similar phrase occurs in an inscription from Khirbet el-Qôm.[18]

The major point of contention concerning these pithoi is the interpretation of the noun *ʾšrth*. Though some scholars read this as the proper name of the West Semitic goddess Asherah,[19] others have argued that the presence of the third-person masculine singular possessive suffix indicates that this noun is

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it is applied to one of the Rephaim at Ugarit and in the context of battle in KA 4.2. He concludes that *name* is a circumlocution for offspring or heir.

14 On the use of parallelism to create common classes, see Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 26–28, 130–131.

15 On names of deities used as incantations that could be weaponized during battle, see Lewis, "'Athtartu's Incantations and the Use of Divine Names as Weapons," *JNES* 70, no. 2 (2011): 207–227, https://doi.org/10.1086/661117. Smoak and Schniedewind apply Lewis's theory to KA 4.2 ("Religion at Kuntillet Ajrud," 14).

16 Aḥituv, Eshel, and Meshel, "Inscriptions," 87–91.

17 Aḥituv, Eshel, and Meshel, 95–97.

18 See Ziony Zevit, "The Khirbet el-Qôm Inscription Mentioning a Goddess," *BASOR* 255 (1984): 39–47, https://doi.org/10.2307/1357074; and Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* (London: Continuum, 2001), 361.

19 Those reading it as the goddess are, among others, William G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); and Baruch Margalit, "The Meaning and Significance of Asherah," *VT* 40, no. 3 (1990): 264–297, https://doi.org/10.2307/1519533.

more likely to be a cult object in these inscriptions.[20] Efforts to explain the significance of Asherah in these contexts vary: P. Kyle McCarter argues that it is a hypostasis of YHWH, specifically the personified "cultically available presence" of Yahweh, or "the Trace of Yahweh," while Jeremy Smoak and William Schniedewind propose that these inscriptions provide evidence of the demotion of the goddess Asherah into a "mere cultic object" at Kuntillet ʿAjrud, which anticipates the comparable polemical move by the writers of Deut 16:21.[21] However, viewing the inscriptions in light of the common ancient Near Eastern phenomenon of deifying cultic objects offers a different, less theologically loaded perspective. Rather than a "mere" cultic object, these inscriptions may attest to Asherah as a deified cultic object, which provides blessings alongside YHWH at Kuntillet ʿAjrud.[22] Whether this object represented the West Semitic goddess Asherah or was associated more directly with YHWH is unclear from the present evidence.

2 Inscriptions from Taymāʾ

A number of inscriptions written in Imperial Aramaic have been recovered from Taymāʾ in northwestern Arabia, a cosmopolitan oasis town located along the incense road between Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Yemen.[23] The town

20 For reading it as a cult object, see McCarter, "Aspects of the Religion of the Israelite Monarchy," 143–149. See also John A. Emerton, "'Yahweh and His Asherah': The Goddess or Her Symbol?," *VT* 49, no. 3 (1999): 315–337, https://doi.org/10.1163/1568533997742280l0; and Saul M. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, SBLMS 34 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 25–26. However, note that other Semitic languages do allow for this type of construction. See Peter Stein, "Gottesname und Genitivattribut?," *ZAW* 131, no. 1 (2019): 1–27, https://doi.org/10.1515/zaw-2019-1006. Note that several scholars suggest that the form with the *h* is simply an alternate form of the name Asherah, rather than a suffixed form. See Zevit, *Religions of Ancient Israel*, 403–404; Josef Tropper, "The Divine Name **Yahwa*," in *The Origins of Yahwism*, ed. Jürgen van Oorschot and Markus Witte, BZAW 484 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), 19, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110448221-001; and Na'aman, "Inscriptions of Kuntillet ʿAjrud through the Lens of Historical Research," 305.

21 McCarter, "Aspects of the Religion of the Israelite Monarchy," 143–149. Smoak and Schniedewind, "Religion at Kuntillet ʿAjrud," 11.

22 Na'aman argues that Asherah does not confer the blessings herself, but rather is "an auspicious presence" that "also conveys much blessings" ("Inscriptions of Kuntillet ʿAjrud through the Lens of Historical Research," 303–304).

23 Arnulf Hausleiter, "Ancient Tayma': An Oasis at the Interface between Cultures," in *Roads of Arabia: The Archaeological Treasures of Saudi Arabia*, ed. Ute Franke and Joachim Gierlichs (Tübingen: Wasmuth, 2011), 103. The Aramaic inscriptions from Taymāʾ are referenced according to their publication in *KAI*. See also Klaus Beyer and Alisdair Livingstone,

is particularly well-known because the Neo-Babylonian king Nabonidus (556–539 BCE) famously sojourned there for a decade of his reign, where he instituted a cult to his preferred deity, the moon god Sîn.[24] However, Achaemenid period Aramaic inscriptions from Taymāʾ focus on three more mysterious deities: *ṣlm*, *šngl'*, and *'šym'*. This coterie of deities often appears together in the inscriptions. The first and the last of these are the focus of the following discussion.[25]

The first deity in this triad is *ṣlm*. This deity appears in several Aramaic inscriptions from Taymāʾ, often with a topographic specification (DN *zy* GN), and is also attested in at least two dozen Taymanitic inscriptions from the surrounding area.[26] A late-fifth century Aramaic inscription on a decorated stela found at Taymāʾ records the approval of its city gods, *ṣlm* of MHRM (*ṣlm zy mhrm*), *šngl'*, and *'šym'*, for the establishment of *ṣlm* of HGN (*ṣlm zy hgn*) (*KAI* 228). The priestly beneficiary of this rite, appropriately named *ṣlmšzb* ("*ṣlm* has saved"), is granted security in perpetuity (*KAI* 228:20–23). This stela has sculptured images on its side, depicting a king holding a staff and standing beneath a winged disk, and a priest before an altar with a bull's head.

In addition, *ṣlm* of Rabb (*ṣlm rb*) receives an offering according to another stela from Taymāʾ, which was found with an uninscribed stone pedestal cube.

"Die neuesten aramäischen Inschriften aus Taima," *ZDMG* 137, no. 2 (1987): 285–296; Livingstone et al., "Taima: Recent Sounding and New Inscribed Material," *Atlal* 7 (1983), 102–116 + pls. 87–97. Note that the present author uses the spelling Taymāʾ, but retains the original spelling in cases where cited publications differ. For an overview of the archaeology and epigraphy of the site, see Ricardo Eichmann, Hanspeter Schaudig, and Arnulf Hausleiter, "Archaeology and Epigraphy at Tayma (Saudi-Arabia)," *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 17, no. 2 (2006): 163–176, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1600-0471.2006.00269.x. For an overview of the history of Arameans at Taymāʾ, see Herbert Niehr, "Northern Arabia," in *The Arameans in Ancient Syria*, ed. Herbert Niehr, HdO 106 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 378–390.

24 Alisdair Livingstone, "Taimāʾ and Nabonidus: It's a Small World," in *Writing and Ancient Near Eastern Society: Papers in Honour of Alan R. Millard*, ed. Piotr Bienkowski, Christopher Mee, and Elizabeth Slater, LHBOTS 426 (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 29–39.

25 The second deity in the trio in the Taymāʾ inscriptions, *šngl'*, is poorly understood. See the overviews of different proposals for understanding this theonym in Thomas, "Eshem and Ashima," 19–20; Mohammed Maraqten, "The Aramaic Pantheon of Taymāʾ," *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 7, no. 1 (1996): 22–26, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1600-0471.1996.tb00084.x. Most theories associate *šngl'* with either the moon god Sîn or the Aramaic word for queen (*šgl*, probably derived from Akkadian *ša ekalli* "the one of the palace"). None of the current proposals suggest that this deity was an object, quality, or attribute, so this deity is not discussed further here.

26 Maraqten, "Aramaic Pantheon of Taymāʾ," 20–21. The Taymanitic inscriptions are available online through the Online Corpus of the Inscriptions of Ancient North Arabia (OCIANA): https://krc.web.ox.ac.uk/article/ociana.

The pedestal has scenes on two sides: one depicting a priest presenting an offering to a bull, with a winged disk with legs above and a moon and star in the corner, and another of a bull's head on an altar receiving an offering from a priest, with two offering stands nearby, and a winged disk, moon, and star above.[27] In another inscription from Taymāʾ, *KAI* 229:3–4, *ṣlm* is explicitly described as a deity (*ṣlm ʾlhʾ*) to whom the pedestal or seat (*mytbʾ*) is dedicated. Finally, a ten-line inscription dated to around 400 BCE describes the establishment of a temple of *ṣlm* of Rabb (*ṣlm zy rb*) that includes a seat or pedestal for the other gods of Taymāʾ, *šngl*ʾ, and *ʾšym*ʾ.[28]

Inscriptions written in Taymanitic from sites in the vicinity of Taymāʾ also feature *ṣlm* as their main deity.[29] They record individuals keeping watch on behalf of *ṣlm*, and *ṣlm* appears as the commanding deity in inscriptions concerning wartime activities.[30] A number of additional short inscriptions are dedicatory in nature, while several of these Taymanitic texts include the promise that "whoever obeys *ṣlm* will not perish."[31] Moreover, *ṣlm* appears as a theophoric element in personal names from the Taymāʾ area, as well as in Akkadian and Arabian personal names.[32]

What type of deity is *ṣlm*? This word is related to the Akkadian noun *ṣalmu*, which is used as a common noun meaning "image" or "statue," as in other Semitic languages, but also appears as a theonym in texts from Mesopota-

27 For more detailed descriptions as well as sketches of the drawings on the stela and the pedestal, see Stephanie Dalley, "The God Ṣalmu and the Winged Disk," *Iraq* 48 (1986): 86, and fig. 1 and 2, https://doi.org/10.2307/4200253.

28 Alisdair Livingstone, "New Light on the Ancient Town of Taima," in *Studia Aramaica: New Sources and New Approaches; Papers Delivered at the London Conference of the Institute of Jewish Studies University College London 26th–28th June 1991*, ed. Markham J. Geller, Jonas C. Greenfield, and Michael Weitzman, JSSSup 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1995), 140–142. See also Klaus Beyer and Alisdair Livingstone, "Eine neue reichsaramäische Inschrift aus Taima," *ZDMG* 140, no. 1 (1990): 1–2. This inscription also depicts a winged sun-disk.

29 See Fokelien Kootstra, "The Language of the Taymanitic Inscriptions and Its Classification," *Arabian Epigraphic Notes* 2 (2016): 67–140.

30 Maraqten, "Aramaic Pantheon of Taymāʾ," 21; F.V. Winnett, "A Reconsideration of Some Inscriptions from the Tayma Area," *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 10 (1980): 133–140.

31 For examples, see texts #0040326, #0040328, #0040385, #0040388 (WTay 01.2, WTay 02, HE 24, HE 31) on OCIANA, and in Kootstra, "Language of the Taymanitic Inscriptions and Its Classification," 67–140.

32 Dalley, "God Ṣalmu and the Winged Disk," 96–97; Maraqten, "Aramaic Pantheon of Taymāʾ," 19–21. In some of the Neo-Assyrian names, it appears with the divine determinative. On the other hand, Maraqten argues that *ṣlm* only occurs as a theophoric element in West Semitic names.

mia.[33] In North Arabia as well as Assyria the common noun could also be used to refer to stelae.[34] Most scholars have attempted to link *ṣlm* to the iconography associated with the Aramaic inscriptions; though a few scholars link it to other imagery on the stelae, Stephanie Dalley's argument that *ṣlm* is the winged disk that appears in the scenes accompanying the inscriptions from Taymāʾ is most convincing, and has been supported by a number of scholars (sometimes with minor modifications).[35] The winged disk is often used to represent the primary deity of local pantheons in the first millennium.[36] The disk represented a variety of different deities at different locations; it may also represent the abstract concept of supreme divinity.

The consensus supports what is also the most economical view: *ṣlm* in the texts from Taymāʾ is a deified winged disk.[37] The different *ṣlm*s attested may also refer to individual winged disks, or the stelae depicting them. Either way, it is clear that *ṣlm* is the recipient of a variety of forms of religious devotion and is described as a superhuman agent with the ability to intervene in human affairs. The deity *ṣlm* is clearly the recipient of cultic devotion, and has a priest

33 On *ṣalmu*/^{d}*Ṣalmu* in Akkadian sources, see Dalley, "God Ṣalmu and the Winged Disk," 85–101.

34 Thomas, "Eshem and Ashima," 18; Florella Scagliarini, "The Word *ṣlm/ṣnm* and Some Words for 'Statue, Idol' in Arabian and Other Semitic Languages," *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 37 (2007): 253–262; Alexandra Sima, "Neue Beiträge zur lihyanischen Epigraphik I," *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 11, no. 2 (2000): 252–260, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1600-0471.2000.aae110209.x; Dalley, "God Ṣalmu and the Winged Disk," 88.

35 Dalley interprets the winged disk as a symbol on which loyalty oaths to the royal family were sworn. Dalley, "God Ṣalmu and the Winged Disk," 101. C.J. Gadd proposes that *ṣlm* is the deified image of the king depicted on one of the stelae. Gadd, "The Harran Inscriptions of Nabonidus," *AnSt* 8 (1958): 42, https://doi.org/10.2307/3642415. Arnulf Hausleiter agrees that *ṣlm* MḤRM is the winged disk, though he suggests that *ṣlm* RB and *ṣlm* HGM are more closely associated with the bull or bull's head. Hausleiter, "Divine Representations at Taymāʾ," in *Dieux et déesses d'Arabie: Images et representations; Actes de la table ronde tenue au Collège de France (Paris) les 1er et 2 octobre 2007*, ed. Isabelle Sache, Orient et Méditerranée 7 (Paris: de Boccard, 2012), 330–332. See also Thomas, "Eshem and Ashima," 19; van der Toorn, "Worshipping Stones," 11.

36 On the association of the winged disk with major deities, see Tallay Ornan, "A Complex System of Religious Symbols: The Case of the Winged Disc in Near Eastern Imagery of the First Millennium BCE," in *Crafts and Images in Contact: Studies on Eastern Mediterranean Art of the First Millennium BCE*, ed. Claudia E. Suter and Christoph Uehlinger, OBO 210 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 207–241. Thomas also concludes that *ṣlm* takes its name from its representation in the cult as the winged disk as the primary deity at Taymāʾ ("Eshem and Ashima," 19).

37 It is possible that *ṣlm* was also perceived as possessing other forms, perhaps even a human-like form, though represented symbolically by the winged disk. However, there is no evidence for anthroform conceptions of this deity in the evidence from Taymāʾ.

and a temple, according to the Aramaic evidence. The Taymanitic inscriptions showcase other features of *ṣlm*: This deity is capable of leading an army, giving commands, and punishing those who do not heed them. This capacity for agency, and specifically leadership, may be emphasized artistically by the legs attached to the winged disk in one of the scenes on the cultic pedestal.

The third deity in the triad that recurs in the Taymāʾ inscriptions, *ʾšym* (Ashimaʾ), is also quite interesting.[38] This theonym may be related to the Semitic common noun for "name" (*šm*), as is *ʾšm* at Elephantine.[39] Both are spelled with a prosthetic initial *aleph*, attested elsewhere in Aramaic inscriptions from North Syria and other Northwest Semitic languages.[40] Not only does *Name* (*šm* or *ʾšm*) appear as a theophoric element in personal names from across the ancient Near East, this deity is also attested at sites ranging from Ebla to Kuntillet ʿAjrud as the recipient of various forms of cultic devotion.[41] Thus, it is possible that *ʾšym* here represents another example of a deified Name. The inscriptions described above indicate that this deity had a cultic pedestal in the temple of *ṣlm* of Rabb (*ṣlm zy rb*), along with *šngl*. It also participated in the approval of the establishment of *ṣlm* of HGN, alongside *ṣlm* of MHRM (*ṣlm zy mhrm*) and *šngl*. However, it is always listed as the third deity in the triad, and is not attested in the Taymanitic inscriptions, which may indicate its lesser importance.

3 Theophoric Personal Names

A number of West Semitic personal names have objects or qualities or attributes in theophoric position. For example, in addition to natural objects, such

38 A deity of the same name (*ʾšym*) appears in 2 Kgs 17:30, where it is associated with Hamath, and *ʾšym* may be related to *ʾšm-byt'l*, a deity attested at Persian period Elephantine. On *ʾšm-byt'l* at Elephantine, see the extensive discussion in ch. 8.

39 Admittedly, however, this is complicated by the plene spelling with medial *y*.

40 Thomas, "Eshem and Ashima," 23. This orthography for "name" (*ʾšm*) is attested in an Aramaic inscription from Zincirli (*KAI* 214:16, 21) and on stelae from Sefire (*KAI* 222C:25; 223B:7). For this spelling in other Northwest Semitic languages, see W. Randall Garr, *Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine 1000–586 B.C.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 47–48. At Taymāʾ this theonym also has a medial *yod* and a final *aleph*. Thomas suggests that this is because *ʾšym* is an independent form with the definite article, while *ʾšm*, which usually occurs as *ʾšm-byt'l* at Elephantine, is a construct form ("Eshem and Ashima," 31).

41 Based on this evidence, Thomas argues that "a *šm* deity seems to have been well established in Syro-Palestinian religion already by the Middle Bronze Age" ("Eshem and Ashima," 26).

as *ṣwr* (e.g., in the name *pdḥṣwr* "Rock has redeemed"), Hebrew personal names contain a number of qualities or attributes, mostly associated with YHWH, in theophoric position, such as: *ʿbdḥyl* "Servant of Power," *qrbʾr* "Light has approached," *yḥwʿly* "Highness is alive," *ʿzryqm* "Help has arisen," and *šʿnp* "Salvation is sublime." "Name" also appears as a theophoric element in names such as *šmydʿ* "Name has recognized."[42] Objects or qualities that occur in Hebrew names include: *ʾhl* "Tent" (*ʾhlyʾb* "Tent is father"), *ḥyl* "Power" (*ʿbdḥyl* "Servant of Power"), *šlm* "Peace" (*ṭbšlm* "Good is Peace").[43] Some of the personal names attested in first millennium Phoenician and Punic sources also contain objects, qualities, or attributes in theophoric position. Among elements occurring in these personal names are the following: *ʾbr* ("Strength"), *ʾhl* ("Tent"), *ʾwn* ("Power, Wealth"), *bt* ("House/Temple"), *gd* ("Fortune"),[44] *ḥrm* ("Holiness; Sacred Property/Enclosure"), *nʿm* ("Pleasantness"), *smlt* ("Statue, Image" with feminine marker -t), *ʿz* ("Strength"), and *šm* ("Name").[45] Moreover, *skn* "Standing Stone" also appears occasionally as a theophoric element in Semitic names, such as *nrskn* "Protégé of Stela" (*KAI* 77:2) and perhaps even Sanchuniathon's name.[46] All of these occur with similar elements as found in other theophoric personal names.

4 Esarhaddon's Treaty with Baʿal of Tyre

Though most of the evidence from Mesopotamia was discussed in chapter 2, the seventh-century treaty of Esarhaddon with Baʿal of Tyre (SAA 02.005) receives special attention here due to two of the Levantine deities it lists: Bayt-ʾil and ʿAnat-bayt-ʾil.[47] This document provides some of the earliest evidence for

42 Annmarie Frank and Hans Rechenmacher, *Morphologie, Syntax und Semantik Althebräischer Personennamen* (Munich, 2020), 96, https://doi.org/10.5282/ubm/epub.73364.

43 Database 'Ancient Hebrew Personal Names' (DAHPN): https://www.dahpn.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/.

44 Ryan Thomas suggests that Gad is a descriptive epithet of El. Thomas, "The God Gad," *JAOS* 139, no. 2 (2021): 307–316, https://doi.org/10.7817/jameroriesoci.139.2.0307.

45 Examples of names with these elements include: *ʾhlbʿl*, *ʾhlmlk*, *ʾwnlpʾs*, *ʿbdbt*, *gdyt*[*n*], *gdnʿm*, *mlkḥrm*, *pnsmlt*, *šmzbl*. See Frank L. Benz, *Personal Names in the Phoenician and Punic Inscriptions: A Catalog, Grammatical Study and Glossary of Elements*, StPohl 8 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1972). Though sparsely attested elsewhere in Phoenician or Punic, *ḥrm*, *šm*, and *ṣlm* (another word meaning "image") appear as deities in other West Semitic sources (e.g., at Elephantine, Kuntillet ʿAjrud and elsewhere, and Taymā).

46 Van der Toorn, "Worshipping Stones," 8.

47 The treaties in this section are cited according to their publication in Simo Parpola and Kazuko Wantanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, SAA 2 (Helsinki: Helsinki

these Aramean deities. The same two deities also occur in a more damaged context in an identical curse in Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty, just before the final deity in that curse section, Kubaba, the goddess of Carchemish (SAA 02.006 467–468). A third appearance occurs in the parallel section of the Tell Tayinat version of the Succession Treaty, with slightly different orthography used for their names, but the same curse (SAA 02.015 T vi 48–49). In the Tell Tayinat version, these two deities appear after Adad and Šāla of Kurba'il and Šarrat-Ekron, and before the final pair of deities in the section, Kubaba and Karhuha of Carchemish. In both of the Succession Treaties, they form part of the group of deities described at the lists' conclusion as "the great gods of heaven and earth residing in the universe whose names are mentioned in this tablet."[48] During the Persian period, deities with similar names also appear in documents from Elephantine.[49]

The treaty with Baʿal of Tyre probably dates to 677 BCE, after Esarhaddon squashed a Sidonian rebellion, placing several of their cities under Tyrian control.[50] It details policies concerning trade imposed on Baʿal, the vassal king of Tyre, by the Assyrian king Esarhaddon, particularly regarding the control of shipping and trade routes.[51] At the end of the treaty, a list of deities and the curses they will enact on treaty violators appears. Most interesting for this study are Bayt-ʾil (ᵈ*ba-a-a-ti*-DINGIR.MEŠ) and ʿAnat-bayt-ʾil (ᵈ*a-na-ti-ba-a-*[*a-ti*]-DINGIR.MEŠ), which occur paired together as inflictors of a curse to be enacted on those who would dare to violate the stipulations therein: "May Bayt-ʾil and ʿAnat-bayt-ʾil [deliver] you into the paws of a devouring lion."[52] These are the last two in the list of deities called upon as guarantors in the first six lines of column IV on the reverse of the tablet, summarily described in the following line as the deities of Assyria, Akkad, and Eber-Nāri. Given the placement of this

University Press, 1988). They are also available online through Oracc's database of SAA texts (http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/saao/corpus).

48 DINGIR.[MEŠ] GAL.MEŠ *šá* AN-*e* KI.TIM *a-ši-bu-tu kib-ra-a-ti ma-la ina tup-pi an-ni-e* MU-*šú-nu zak-ru* (SAA 02.006 472–473; and SAA 02.015 T vi 52–54).

49 The evidence from Elephantine is discussed in detail in ch. 8.

50 On the context, purpose, structure, and production of this and other Neo-Assyrian *adê*-texts, see Jacob Lauinger, "Neo-Assyrian Scribes, 'Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty,' and the Dynamics of Textual Mass Production," in *Texts and Contexts: The Circulation and Transmission of Cuneiform Texts in Social Space*, ed. Paul Delnero and Jacob Lauinger, SANER 9 (Boston: de Gruyter, 2015), 286–292, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781614515371-011; and Lauinger, "The Neo-Assyrian *adê*: Treaty, Oath, or Something Else?," *ZABR* 19 (2013): 99–115.

51 Lauinger describes the tablet containing the treaty as a "chancellery copy" that "may have been written and stored for consultation" in Nineveh ("Neo-Assyrian Scribes," 287).

52 ᵈ*ba-a-a-ti*-DINGIR.MEŠ ᵈ*a-na-ti-ba-a-*[*a-ti*]-DINGIR.MEŠ *ina* ŠU.2 UR.MAḪ *a-ki-li* [*lim-nu-u*]-*ku-nu* (SAA 02.005 r iv 6′–7′). The reason for the plural spelling DINGIR.MEŠ is unclear.

summation, it is clear that line 6 cannot refer to deities of Tyre. It is most likely that the final two deities in this list belong to the last category in the summary statement: those of Eber-Nāri, or "Beyond the River," the Assyrian term for Syria. Thus, they can be identified as the deities of Arameans who were in Assyrian-controlled territory in North Syria.[53]

In addition to this treaty and Esarhaddon's Succession treaty, these theonyms also occur in texts from Persian period Elephantine and Hermopolis, and *byt'l* may be construed as a deity in a few biblical texts.[54] Anthroponyms with *byt'l* as a theophoric element are attested in a debt record in Aramaic from Sefire (*KAI* 227), and in one name from the Hebrew Bible (Zech 7:2), as well as in a handful of West-Semitic names from Babylonia, and the names attested at Persian period Elephantine.[55]

Bayt-ʾil, literally "house of god/ʾEl," is often understood as a standing stone (or "betyl").[56] ʿAnat-bayt-ʾil is more challenging to explain. It is possible, though less likely, that the noun *ʿnt* here refers to the goddess ʿAnatu, known from Ugaritic and other sources, but it would be quite surprising for this goddess to be paired here as a consort with Bayt-ʾil. The construct form used in these texts would be an atypical way of designating a consort; in addition, at Ugarit the goddess ʿAnatu is usually paired with the god Baʾlu, though not necessarily as his consort. Moreover, the other deities in the curse sections of the treaties are not generally arranged into consort pairs. Instead, it is much more probable that *ʿnt* here has the meaning of the common noun (cognate with Hebrew *ʿēt* < **ʿint*) for "sign," "presence," or "time."[57] ʿAnat-bayt-ʾil is thus the "Sign" or "Presence" of the Temple/Standing Stone. Interestingly, in the version of the

53 This interpretation is also supported by the indication of the Aramaic, rather than Phoenician, orthography, which retains the diphthong *-ay*. See also van der Toorn's compelling list of reasons for his identification of these two deities as Aramean, and specifically from North Syria ("Worshipping Stones," 5).

54 These examples are discussed in ch. 8.

55 The personal names from Babylonia are listed in Michael D. Coogan, *West Semitic Personal Names in the Murašu Documents*, HSM 7 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 48–49. Van der Toorn discusses his view of the anthroponyms in "Worshipping Stones," 5. See ch. 8, below, for a more detailed analysis of these theophoric personal names at Elephantine.

56 See van der Toorn, "Worshipping Stones," 5–6; Edward R. Dalglish, "Bethel (Deity)," *ABD* 1:706–710; Wolfgang Röllig, "Bethel," DDD, 173–175; Sergio Ribichini, "Baetyl," *DDD*, 157–159; Tryggve N.D. Mettinger, *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context*, ConBOT 42 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1995), 131–132; and Sommer, *Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel*, 28–29.

57 As first suggested by Albright, "Evolution of the West Semitic Divinity An-Anat-Attâ," 73–101. Olyan also supports this view in "Some Observations Concerning the Identity of the Queen of Heaven," *UF* 19 (1987): 170.

treaty from Tell Tayinat, the divine determinative is lacking before the start of the name ʿAnat-bayt-ʾil; this could be a further indication that the deity was considered to be a deified object or quality belonging to the deity Bayt-ʾil.[58]

Especially intriguing is the nature of the curse this pair is supposed to implement upon default of the treaties. Whereas many of the deities in the curse sections are called upon to take direct, physically violent action against violators, these two are instead asked merely to *deliver* the perpetrators to the man-eating lion that will then devour them. Bayt-ʾil and ʿAnat-bayt-ʾil are attributed humanlike minds that are capable of understanding the specific request made in the treaty, identifying the appropriate target, and taking action if the circumstances require it. Yet their agency is more limited than many of the other deities in this text: the lion will perform the paws-on part of the curse's work. The other, more typically anthroform deities in the curse sections do not require animals as enforcers.[59]

5 Observations on First Millennium Texts

The evidence discussed in this chapter comes from several disparate locations in the first millennium. Nevertheless, it seems clear that the phenomenon of deifying objects, qualities, and attributes continued into the Iron Age and later periods. As in the evidence from prior periods, the items and concepts that receive this treatment are usually closely connected with other deities. Similar to anthroform deities, they are attributed agency, though perhaps not as active as that of other gods in all cases. The next chapter discusses evidence for this phenomenon from Persian-period Egypt, demonstrating the enduring persistency of this tendency in the ancient Near East.

58 Jacob Lauinger suggests instead that the DINGIR at the start of the name may have been simply lost due to haplography. Lauinger, "Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty at Tell Tayinat: Text and Commentary," *JCS* 64 (2012): 119, https://doi.org/10.5615/jcunestud.64.0087. It is impossible to know the reason for the absence of the determinative with certainty.

59 However, Palil (^{d}IGI.DU) is asked to allow eagles and vultures to eat the flesh of wrongdoers in both versions of the Esarhaddon Succession Treaty (SAA 02.006 519). This deity need only fail to intervene. Interestingly, it has been suggested that Palil is in fact the deified standard of Nergal. Palil is called "the one who goes in front" (*a-lik maḫ-ri*) in the Treaty of Aššur-Nerari with Mati'ilu, king of Arpad (SAA 02.002 r. vi 19), which may support this hypothesis. If this is the case, it would provide another example of nonanthroform deities requiring outsourcing to other agents (in this case animals) to fulfill such curses (Shana Zaia, pers. comm.).

CHAPTER 8

Aramaic Documents from Egypt and the Hebrew Bible

The evidence analyzed in this chapter demonstrates that the treatment of objects, qualities, and attributes as deities continued into the Persian period in the ancient Near East. References to a temple dedicated to YHW in the Aramaic documents from Persian period Elephantine in Egypt show that YHW was the primary god of the Judean community there, but he was not the only deity they acknowledged: several other deities appear in oaths, a cultic collection account, and personal names. These entities are best understood as deified objects or spaces and attributes. Several of them may also appear in Papyrus Amherst 63, which also treats the Throne of YHW as a deity. Moreover, the Aramaic texts from Egypt shed new light on some difficult passages in Jer 7 and 48.

1 The Judean Archives from Elephantine

Elephantine (modern Geziret Aswan; ancient Egyptian *ꜣbw*, Aramaic *yb*) is an island about one and a half kilometers in length and approximately sixty-one hectares in area located in Upper Egypt, across the Nile from the ancient town of Syene (modern Aswan; ancient Egyptian and Aramaic *swn*), just north of the rocky First Cataract.[1] In addition to being a military center of strategic importance, Elephantine was a religious center throughout most of its occupation and was home to temples of Egyptian gods and goddesses, such as Khnum and Satet, from an early date. After the conquest of Egypt by Cambyses in 526 BCE, Elephantine was occupied in part by groups of professional soldiers who continued to be employed there during the Persian regime.[2] Among the personnel

1 For a colorful description of the island and surrounding area, see Porten's classic study, *Archives from Elephantine*, 35–42. In addition to taking this opportunity to express gratitude for his many contributions to Elephantine studies, the author also wishes to thank Bezalel for his friendship during the past few years. He will be remembered fondly.

2 Bob Becking, *Identity in Persian Egypt: The Fate of the Yehudite Community of Elephantine* (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2020), 1.

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stationed there were Judeans and their families, who left evidence of some elements of their religious practices in several of the Aramaic papyri from this site.[3]

Where exactly these Judeans were from, or when they came to Elephantine, remains a matter of speculation.[4] The Judeans themselves claim that the establishment of their temple predated the conquest of Cambyses.[5] This group was described in the Aramaic documents using the ethnic-geographic term *yhwdy*, "Judean," reflecting their ancestry in Judah.[6] They were one of several

3 The Aramaic texts from Elephantine are referenced according to their publication in *TAD* A–D; and Bezalel Porten, *The Elephantine Papyri in English: Three Millennia of Cross-cultural Continuity and Change*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011).

4 Angela Rohrmoser provides a convenient overview of some of the hypotheses. Rohrmoser, *Götter, Tempel und Kult der Judäo-Aramäer von Elephantine: Archäologische und schriftliche Zeugnisse aus dem perserzeitlichen Ägypten*, AOAT 396 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2014), 73–81. See also Gard Granerød, *Dimensions of Yahwism in the Persian Period: Studies in the Religion and Society of the Judaean Community at Elephantine*, BZAW 488 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 24–28. As Granerød notes, the evidence is not decisive for any one theory. For further discussion of the early history of the Judean diaspora in Egypt, including the origins of the Judean community at Elephantine, see Aren M. Wilson-Wright, *Jeremiah's Egypt: Prophetic Reflections on the Saite Period*, ANEM 30 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2023), 50–60. Karel van der Toorn presents an interesting alternative theory, informed by his reading of Papyrus Amherst 63. Van der Toorn, *Becoming Diaspora Jews: Behind the Story of Elephantine*, ABRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 61–88.

5 See *TAD* A 4.7:14; 4.8:13. However, Becking notes that this may be an "invented tradition" (Becking, *Identity in Persian Egypt*, 20). Wilson-Wright convincingly argues that Judean soldiers were already stationed at Elephantine prior to the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE (Wilson-Wright, *Jeremiah's Egypt*, 55–60). The mention of "the land of the Syenians" as a place where Judean exiles were living in Isa 49:12 (a text conventionally dated to 539 BCE) may also support the claim that the Judean community at Elephantine was already in residence at least a decade prior to the conquest of Cambyses. Gad Barnea suggests that the first wave of migration can be dated to the latter part of the reign of Amasis II (570–526 BCE), at which time settlement occurred first at Syene, while the temple was being built, and later on the island itself. Barnea, "The Migration of the Elephantine Yahwists under Amasis II," JNES 82 (2023): 103–118, https://doi.org/10.1086/723695. See also Bezalel Porten, "Settlement of the Jews at Elephantine and the Arameans at Syene," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 452–456.

6 As a number of scholars have argued, *Judean* is the preferable translation of this term. Shaye J.D. Cohen's work has been especially influential in this regard. Cohen argues that prior to the end of the second century BCE, Ioudaios/Yehudi (*yhwdy*) is "always used as an ethnic-geographic term, like Egyptian, Phrygian, Phoenician, and other such terms," including cases, such as in Elephantine, where *yhwdy* is used to identify persons not actually born in Judah, but living in the diaspora, where the ethnic meaning becomes the most important. He concludes that the term does not take on the meaning "Jew," as "a function of religion or culture," until the Maccabean period. See Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties*, HCS 31 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 70–75 and 82–84. Moreover,

groups, including Persians, Egyptians, Arameans, and others, cohabiting and interacting at Elephantine within the same cultural, economic, and physical space.[7] In fact, these designations were so loose and overlapping that some individuals could even be called both Judean and Aramean. This is illustrated by the case of the prominent Mibtahiah, daughter of Mahseiah, and her family, which demonstrates the many possible ways in which Judeans could interact with Arameans and Egyptians, and the fluidity of these group identities. Mibtahiah, who is known through the documents from her personal archive, had a Khorazmian neighbor (*TAD* B 2.2), married two different Egyptian men (*TAD* B 2.6 and 2.8), took an oath by the goddess Sati (*TAD* B 2.8), but gave her children names with the theophoric element YH (*TAD* B 2.9. and 2.10) and bore a name with the element YH herself. Yet her children are also called Aramean (*TAD* B 2.11). Her father, Mahseiah son of Jedaniah, is called a Judean in some texts (*TAD* B 2.2, 2.3, 2.4), but an Aramean in several others (*TAD* B 2.1, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8). Clearly, individuals could be part of both communities simultaneously.[8] In short, as scholars have increasingly recognized, the Judeans of Elephantine are best characterized as a fuzzily delineated group in close cultural contact with other groups residing in Elephantine, rather than a rigidly bounded community whose members are sharply distinguished from Arameans and other

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as Paul-Eugène Dion observes, the key characteristics of Judaism are not yet in evidence at Elephantine. Dion, "La religion des papyrus d'Éléphantine: Un reflet du Juda d'avant l'exil," in *Kein Land für sich allein: Studien zum Kulturkontakt in Kanaan, Israel/Palästina und Ebirnâri für Manfred Weippert zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Ulrich Hübner and Ernst Axel Knauf, OBO 186 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 244–245. See also the discussions in Steve Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History," *JSJ* 38, no. 4 (2007): 457–512, https://doi.org/10.1163/156851507X193108; and Granerød, *Dimensions of Yahwism in the Persian Period*, 3–4.

7 See the discussion of the various ethnic groups attested in the evidence from Elephantine in this period and their interrelationships in Reinhard G. Kratz, "Arameans and Judeans: Ethnography and Identity at Elephantine," in *Israel in Egypt: The Land of Egypt as Concept and Reality for Jews in Antiquity and the Early Medieval Period*, ed. Alison Salvesen, Sarah Pearce, and Miriam Frenkel, AGJU 110 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 64–71, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004435407_004.

8 See also Kratz, "Arameans and Judeans," 79–80. He points out that at Elephantine, "persons with clearly Hebrew (Jewish, theophoric) names are designated as 'Judeans' as well as 'Arameans'" and the "majority of the people who are designated 'Arameans,' bear Hebrew names and therefore are Judeans" (71–72). See also Rohrmoser, who prefers to use the term "Judeo-Aramean" to describe members of this community (*Götter, Tempel und Kult der Judäo-Aramäer von Elephantine*, 6–8 and 70–73); and Karel van der Toorn, "Ethnicity at Elephantine: Jews, Arameans, Caspians," *TA* 43, no. 2 (2016): 147–164, https://doi.org/10.1080/03344355.2016.1215532.

groups.[9] All of these groups gave cultic attention to a range of deities. As the following discussion demonstrates, the Judeans were no exception.

2 Deities in the Documents from Elephantine

The Aramaic papyri and ostraca from Egypt are the primary textual sources for information regarding the Judeans in Elephantine and their religious practices, alongside the archaeological data.[10] This corpus includes letters, contracts and other legal documents, lists, accounting records, a few literary and historical texts, ostraca, and other inscriptions.[11] The documents pertaining to the Judean community at Elephantine date to the fifth century BCE.[12]

The textual evidence indicates that YHW, who had a temple at Elephantine, was the primary god of the Judeans there.[13] But YHW was not the only deity the Judeans residing in Egypt acknowledged: *ḥrm-byt'l*, *ʿnt-byt'l*, *ʿnt-yhw*, *ʾšm-byt'l*,

9 Bernd U. Schipper makes similar observations. Schipper, *A Concise History of Ancient Israel: From the Beginnings through the Hellenistic Era*, trans. Michael J. Lesley, CrStHB 11 (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2019). See also Ernst Axel Knauf, "Elephantine und das vor-biblische Judentum," in *Religion und Religionskontakte in Zeitalter der Achämeniden*, ed. Reinhard G. Kratz, Veröffentlichungen der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft für Theologie 22 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2002), 179–188.

10 For a thorough survey of the findspots, acquisition, and history of publication of the Aramaic documents, see Esko Siljanen, "Judeans of Egypt in the Persian Period (539–332 BCE) in Light of the Aramaic Documents" (PhD diss., University of Helsinki, 2017), 67–97. For a concise overview of the history of excavation of the site, see Cornelius von Pilgrim, "On the Archaeological Background of the Aramaic Papyri from Elephantine in the Light of Recent Fieldwork," in *Elephantine Revisited: New Insights into the Judean Community and Its Neighbors*, ed. Margaretha Folmer (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2022), 1–16, https://doi.org/10.5325/j.ctv31r2n8z.6. See also von Pilgrim, "'Anyway, We Should Really Dig on Elephantine Some Time': A Short Tour through the Research History of the Towns along the First Cataract," in *Between Worlds: Finds from Tombs on Egypt's Southern Border*, ed. Ludwig D. Morenz, Michael Müller-Höveler, and Amr El-Hawary (Rahden: Leidorf, 2011), 63–96.

11 For further details on the corpus and findspots, see Porten and Yardeni's foreword to *TAD* D, v–x; Siljanen, "Judeans of Egypt in the Persian Period," 67–97; James D. Moore, *New Aramaic Papyri from Elephantine in Berlin*, Studies on Elephantine 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 1–29.

12 Porten and Yardeni date the earliest document pertaining to the Judeans of Elephantine to 495 BCE (*TAD* B 5.1) and the latest to 399 BCE (*TAD* A 3.9).

13 The temple is referenced in letters and contracts. There may also be archaeological evidence for the temple. See Rohrmoser's review of the evidence (*Götter, Tempel und Kult der Judäo-Aramäer von Elephantine*, 153–185), as well as Cornelius von Pilgrim, "Die 'Festung' von Elephantine in der Spätzeit—Anmerkungen zum archäologischen Befund," in *In the Shadow of Bezalel: Aramaic, Biblical, and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Bezalel Porten*, ed. Alejandro F. Botta, CHANE 60 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 203–208, https://doi.org/

byt'l, *ḥrm*, *ʿnt*, and *ʾšm* appear as guarantors of oaths, recipients of offerings, and in theophoric position in personal names. Since their discovery, scholars have debated how best to understand these entities.[14] Are all of them deities? If so, what is their nature? The discussion below takes a fresh look at these entities as they appear in two oaths, the cultic collection account, and the inventory of personal names from Elephantine to offer some interpretations from a different perspective, against the background of the ancient Near Eastern tendency to deify objects, qualities, and attributes, as surveyed in the previous chapters of this volume.

2.1 *The Oaths from Elephantine*

Ancient Near Eastern oaths typically cast deities in the role of guarantors for the legally binding promises made by people.[15] Oaths thus provide excellent evidence for the attribution of this superhuman form of divine agency. Several oaths from Elephantine attest to well-known anthroform deities fulfilling this function: two texts record judicial oaths sworn by YHW,[16] while a third attests to an oath sworn by Sati (the Egyptian goddess Satet).[17] However, other oaths feature less readily identifiable entities as guarantors: *TAD* B 7.2 contains an oath by *ḥrm-byt'l*, while *TAD* B 7.3 describes an oath probably by *ḥrm* and definitely by *ʿnt-yhw*.[18]

10.1163/9789004240841_015; and von Pilgrim, "Tempel des Jahu und 'Straße des Königs'—Ein Konflikt in der späten Perserzeit auf Elephantine," in *Egypt—Temple of the Whole World: Studies in Hounour of Jan Assmann*, ed. Sibylle Meyer, Numen 97 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 303–317, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047402527_016.

14 For example, Albert Vincent devoted considerable analysis to *ḥrm-byt'l* and *ʾšm-byt'l* in his early book on Elephantine. Vincent, *La religion des Judéo-Araméens d'Éléphantine* (Paris: Geuthner, 1937), 593–621; 654–680. Yet, despite almost a century of scholarship since Vincent, scholars still debate how to interpret these entities, as Karel van der Toorn points out. Van der Toorn, "Eshem-Bethel and Herem-Bethel: New Evidence from Amherst Papyrus 63," *ZAW* 128, no. 4 (2016): 668–680, https://doi.org/10.1515/zaw-2016-0037.

15 For a basic introduction to oaths in the ancient Near East, see JoAnn Scurlock, "Oaths, Ancient Near East," in *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall, 13 vols. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, 2012), https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah01146.

16 See *TAD* B 2.2 and B 7.1. In *TAD* B 2.2:4, Dargamana, son of Khvarshaina, who has a house in Elephantine, has accepted an oath made by Mahseiah, son of Jedaniah, a Judean in Elephantine (and perhaps also sworn by his wife and son) by "YHW the god in Elephantine the fortress." In B 7.1, an oath by "YHW the god" is imposed on someone whose name is missing from the fragment concerning an accusation about the theft of fish, leveled by Mahseiah son of Shibah, an Aramean of Syene.

17 See *TAD* B 2.8. In *TAD* B 2.8:1–5, Pia, son of Paḥi, a builder of Syene, has accepted an oath sworn by Mahseiah's daughter, Mibtahiah, here identified as "an Aramean of Syene," by "Sati the goddess," the Egyptian goddess Satet.

18 Porten and Yardeni reconstruct "*ḥ*[*rm*]" in *TAD* B 7.3:3. However, Ryan Thomas reads

Dated to year 4 of King Artaxerxes (401 BCE), *TAD* B 7.2 describes an oath to be sworn by Malchiah son of Jashobiah, whom this document identifies as an Aramean property owner in Elephantine.[19] Though the bottom portion is missing, the situation is clear from the remaining text. Malchiah must make an oath for Artafrada, son of Arvastahmara, swearing that he did not rob Artafrada's house or assault his wife.[20] Despite his Yahwistic name, Malchiah's oath is to be declared to "*ḥrm-byt'l* the god (*'lh'*) in the presence of four officials/supporters/oath administrators/avengers ([*m/n*]*qmn*)."[21] Though this last word, which appears in line 8, is also uncertain, the meaning of *ḥrm-byt'l* at the end of line 7 has been the main focus of debate concerning this text. Is this a deity? If so, what type?

First, it should be noted that *ḥrm-byt'l* appears in this oath formula in clear apposition with the epithet, "the god" (*'lh'*). The noun phrase is written as a single unit, with no space apparent in between *ḥrm* and *byt'l*.[22] These two features can leave no doubt that first, *ḥrm* and *byt'l* are closely connected, most likely as a construct chain, and second, the entity so designated is explicitly described as a deity.[23]

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y[*hw*]. Thomas, "The Meaning of Asherah in Hebrew Inscriptions," *Sem* 59 (2017): 175; and Thomas, "Reconstructing the Pantheon of Judean Elephantine," *UF* 51 (2020): 248–251. The shape of the remaining letter makes the former appear more likely.

19 Porten, *Elephantine Papyri in English*, 262.

20 The name Arvastahmara is partially reconstructed by Porten and Yardeni.

21 *TAD* B 7.2:7–8. The term [*m*]*qmn* is variously reconstructed and translated by Porten and Yardeni as "officials/supporters/oath administrators" (*TAD* B, 145), and by Porten and Grelot (reading [*nq*]*mn*) as "avengers" (Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 156).

22 Porten, who renders the name as Ḥerembethel, argues that it is "clearly written as one word and cannot be separated to read 'the sacred property of Bethel' (*contra* K. van der Toorn, *ZAW* 98 [1986], 283)" (*Elephantine Papyri in English*, 263n22). See also the handcopy of *TAD* B 7.2. The present author prefers to transliterate these two nouns (and other similar pairings) with a hyphen, to indicate that they form a construct chain.

23 On double deity names elsewhere in the ancient Near East, see Barbara Nevling Porter, "The Anxiety of Multiplicity: Concepts of the Divine in Ancient Assyria," in Porter, *One God or Many?*, 211–272. Concerning double divine names in Mesopotamia, she suggests that "the second god's name in the paired names is probably also descriptive, identifying a particular form in which the first god was worshipped in the temple in question, probably a form of that god characterized by the main quality, power, or role associated with the second god," while the first element in the double name is "described as like, or equivalent to, or incorporating the qualities of, the second god" (236–237). See also John Baines, "Egyptian Deities in Context: Multiplicity, Unity, and the Problem of Change," in Porter, *One God or Many?*, 9–78. He offers an interpretation of a similar phenomenon in Egyptian religion: "the deity worshiped under the combined name is single and has the 'identity' of the first name," while for the second element, "It is as if the process of per-

The second component, or *nomen rectum*, of *ḥrm-byt'l* is easier to identify than the first, as a deity *byt'l* is known from other sources. The name *byt'l* literally means the "house/temple (*byt*) of god/ʾEl (*ʾl*)," and probably refers to a standing stone.[24] The oldest occurrence of a deity *byt'l* is in the treaty of Esarhaddon with Baʿal of Tyre, discussed in the previous chapter. There are also references to this deity closer to Elephantine: according to one of the Hermopolis papyri,[25] *byt'l* had a temple in nearby Syene, along with the Queen of Heaven, Banit, and Nabû.[26] Moreover, *byt'l* also appears in Papyrus Amherst 63,[27] as well as in theophoric position in personal names from Babylonia and Elephantine during the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods.[28] This deity

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sonification occurs in reverse: instead of a powerful concept becoming a deity, a deity is reduced from being a full 'person' to being a concept or designator of a quality" (32, 35). See also Hundley, *Yahweh among the Gods*, 54–55 and 114. In the case of double deity names at Elephantine, the present author suggests a somewhat different interpretation, which may demonstrate the variety of meanings associated with double divine names in different contexts.

24 See the discussion in the previous chapter. Rohrmoser argues that *byt'l*, when combined with another divine name at Elephantine, refers to a betyl, or holy stone, belonging to that deity. However, in the case of *ḥrm-byt'l*, she argues against this interpretation, as she does not think *ḥrm* constitutes a deity, but rather a type of offering (*Götter, Tempel und Kult der Judäo-Aramäer von Elephantine*, 126–149). For a critique of this view, see Granerød, *Dimensions of Yahwism in the Persian Period*, 248–250.

25 For an overview of the Hermopolis papyri, which consist of a cache of eight letters dating to the late sixth or early fifth centuries BCE sent from soldiers in Memphis to their families in Syene and Luxor that ended up abandoned en route in a jar at Hermopolis, see Porten, *Elephantine Papyri in English*, 75–77.

26 *TAD* A 2.1:1 records a greeting of the temple of *byt'l* and the temple of the Queen of Heaven addressed to the writer's sister. For Banit and Nabû, see *TAD* A 2.2 and 2.3. See also Bezalel Porten, "The Religion of the Jews of Elephantine in Light of the Hermopolis Papyri," *JNES* 28, no. 2 (1969): 116–121, https://doi.org/10.1086/371997.

27 See Papyrus Amherst 63, VIII 10–14; X 9–13, as translated by Karel van der Toorn, *Papyrus Amherst 63*, AOAT 448 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2018). See also van der Toorn's discussion of this deity and associated epithets in Papyrus Amherst 63 in "Eshem-Bethel and Herem Bethel," 673. For other text editions, see Richard C. Steiner and Charles F. Nims, "The Aramaic Text in Demotic Script: Text, Translation, and Notes," https://www.academia.edu/44014332/Richard_C_Steiner_and_Charles_F_Nims_The_Aramaic_Text_in_Demotic_Script_Text_Translation_and_Notes_Repository_yu_edu_and_Academia_edu_2017_92_pages, 2017; and Tawny Holm, *Aramaic Literary Texts* (Atlanta: SBL Press, forthcoming).

28 For example, *byt'lntn* ("*Byt'l* has given") in *TAD* A 2.1:9 and *byt'ldlny* ("*Byt'l* saved me") in *KAI* 227 r.4. For further examples, see Ran Zadok, *On West Semites in Babylonia during the Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods: An Onomastic Study* (Jerusalem: Wanaarta, 1977), 60–61; van der Toorn, "Worshipping Stones," 5–6; Röllig, "Bethel," 174; Silverman, *Religious Values in the Jewish Proper Names at Elephantine*. In the Hebrew Bible, a personal name with this theophoric element may also occur in Zech 7:2.

may also be related to Baitylos, one of the children of Ouranos mentioned in the lore of Sanchuniathon recorded by Philo of Byblos, who may be connected with stones, and in some later Greek inscriptions from Syria.[29]

Based on the Esarhaddon treaty, *byt'l* seems to be a deity of Syrian origin.[30] But exactly what type of deity is *byt'l*? As the preceding chapters have shown, there is ample evidence for the deification of temples and cult objects in the ancient Near East, making it entirely plausible that *byt'l* is exactly what this linguistically transparent theonym suggests. The simplest explanation is that *byt'l* is (or at least began as) a deified temple or deified cult stela, though it is also possible that this deity eventually took on more humanlike characteristics.[31] Regarding the evidence for standing stones or stelae at Elephantine, it is interesting to note that a letter describing the destruction of the temple of YHW specifically lists stone pillars among its contents (*TAD* A 4.7:9/*TAD* A 4.8:8).

The first half of the noun phrase *ḥrm-byt'l* is more difficult. The noun *ḥrm* has been variously interpreted as "sacred property," "sacred enclosure," "inviolable/consecrated property," or "holiness." Bezalel Porten claims that *ḥrm-byt'l* is the "sacredness" or "sacred enclosure" of the temple,[32] while Olyan interprets *ḥrm-byt'l* as "the holiness of the temple," a divinized attribute of the temple.[33]

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29 See Harold W. Attridge and Robert A. Oden, Jr., *Philo of Byblos: The Phoenician History*, CBQMS 9 (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1981); and Albert I. Baumgarten, *The Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos: A Commentary*, EPRO 89 (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 202–203. On Baitylos's possible relationship to Bethel, see Ribichini, "Baetyl," 157–159, with bibliography. Zeus Betylos is mentioned in a third century CE inscription from Dura Europos, while Symbetylos and Zeus Baitylos are mentioned in inscriptions from Kafr Nabo and Qal'at Kâlôta. See Ribichini, "Baetyl," 157–158.

30 For a concise summary of the arguments in favor of a northern Syrian origin for *byt'l*, see Thomas, "Eshem and Ashima," 15–16.

31 See Thomas, "Eshem and Ashima," 19; Becking, *Identity in Persian Egypt*, 46; van der Toorn, *Papyrus Amherst* 63, 28–29; Mettinger, *No Graven Image?*, 130–132. See also Gen 28:22. It is possible that the name eventually became separated from its original meaning. Van der Toorn suggests that *byt'l* came to be identified with YHW/YHWH ("Eshem-Bethel and Herem-Bethel," 668–669). According to van der Toorn, these two theonyms refer to one-and-the same deity in Papyrus Amherst 63, and *'nt-yhw* and *'nt-byt'l* as they occur in the Elephantine material must therefore be variants of one another. However, conclusive proof for this thesis is lacking. On the other hand, the fact that *byt'l* has a temple in Syene, while YHW has one in Elephantine, suggests that these are two separate deities. Moreover, the polemic against Bethel in Jer 48:13 does not suggest that *byt'l* was viewed as an alternate name for YHWH, but rather a rival deity.

32 Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 167–168. Porten concludes that *ḥrm-byt'l* is an Aramean god. However, his argument rests on his conception of the Judeans in Elephantine as monotheistic Yahwists, which is contradicted by the evidence.

33 Olyan, *Thousand Thousands Served Him*, 96.

In his earlier publications, Karel van der Toorn argued that *ḥrm* is an "inviolable piece of property such as temple treasure, on which occasionally an oath was sworn," rather than a deity.[34] However, in making this claim, van der Toorn was forced to disassociate the occurrence of *ḥrm* in this oath from the theophoric element *ḥrm* occurring in personal names at Elephantine.[35] This is unconvincing since there is no reason to assume that these refer to different entities, and indeed, van der Toorn's recent analysis of Papyrus Amherst 63 led him to reverse his earlier opinion on *ḥrm-byt'l*.[36] According to van der Toorn's updated view, *ḥrm-byt'l* is an "avatar" or "manifestation" of *byt'l* as sexual partner, whom he argues is equated with YHW in both Papyrus Amherst and at Elephantine.[37]

Which of these interpretations best accounts for the evidence? The suggestion that *ḥrm* should not be understood as a deity in this context, cannot be a deity worshiped by Judeans, or that *ḥrm-byt'l* is an alternative name for YHW, are all unsatisfactory, for a number of reasons. First, it is clear that *ḥrm-byt'l* is both explicitly called a deity and also functions as a deity in this oath. Second, the argument that this deity was strictly an Aramean deity assumes a sharper distinction between Arameans and Judeans than the evidence supports. Moreover, Malchiah, the oath-taker, has a Yahwistic name. Third, there is no clear evidence for an equivalence between *ḥrm-byt'l* and YHW.

In addition, both *ḥrm* and *byt'l* occur as theophoric elements in personal names at Elephantine, and *ḥrm* probably occurs on its own as a deity in another oath (addressed below). The evidence thus demonstrates that *ḥrm* and *byt'l* were both treated as deities. In this case, where they occur together, it is most

34 Van der Toorn, "Ḥerem-Bethel and Elephantine Oath Procedure," 285. See also Rohrmoser, *Götter, Tempel und Kult der Judäo-Aramäer von Elephantine*, 146–152.

35 See van der Toorn, "Ḥerem-Bethel and Elephantine Oath Procedure," 285: "Anthroponyms like *ḥrmntn*, in which *ḥrm* is clearly a theophoric element, show that Ḥerem was also considered a god. This evidence is indeed indisputable. Yet it would be blurring the issue if the god Ḥerem is confused with *ḥrm* as a designation of consecrated and inviolable objects."

36 Supplying a missing *mem* to read *ḥrbyt'l* as *ḥr⟨m⟩byt'l* in line 14 of column XVII, the only place that *ḥrm-byt'l* occurs in Papyrus Amherst, van der Toorn interprets this passage as a description of a "sacred marriage" between the deity *ḥrm-byt'l* and Nanay ("Eshem-Bethel and Herem-Bethel," 670, 675–678). However, Tawny L. Holm interprets this as a sacred marriage between Nanay and Baʿal/Baʿal-Shamayn. Holm, "Sacrifice and Feasting in Papyrus Amherst 63," in *Ceremonies, Feasts and Festivities in Ancient Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean World: Performance and Participation; Proceedings of the 11th Melammu Workshop, Barcelona, 29–31 January 2020*, ed. Rocío Da Riva, Ana Arroyo, and Céline Debourse (Münster: Zaphon, 2022), 138. Steiner reads "the Lord, Bethel/the Lord of Bethel" here (Steiner and Nims, "Aramaic Text in Demotic Script," 67).

37 Van der Toorn, "Eshem-Bethel and Herem-Bethel," 677. On the basis of the sacred marriage context, he connects *ḥrm* with Akkadian *ḫarmu* "young lover, mate," suggesting that this entity is best understood as Ḥarim-Bethel, or "Bethel in his capacity as sexual mate."

probable that *ḥrm-byt'l* is a construct chain specifying an object or attribute belonging to *byt'l*. Thus, this entity is the deified *ḥrm* of the deity *byt'l*, a special object or space belonging to *byt'l*, a deity capable of ensuring the security of an oath.

As mentioned above, *ḥrm* probably also occurs in a second oath, which may provide further evidence concerning what type of deity is being referenced.[38] The text *TAD* B 7.3 is a fragmentary text dating to the late fifth century BCE that contains the record of an oath by Menahem son of Shallum for Meshullam son of Nathan regarding the ownership of a she-ass.[39] In this document, Menahem swears an oath by "*ḥ*[*rm*] [the go]d, by/in *msgd'*, and by *'nt-yhw*." If the restoration of the text is accurate, the use of *ḥrm* by itself in this oath is further proof that *ḥrm* was indeed considered to be a deity at Elephantine. It is especially intriguing to consider the relationship between this deity and the other guarantor(s) of this oath: *'nt-yhw* and perhaps also *msgd'*.[40] If these entities form a triad, perhaps they relate to one another in some way or share some similar characteristics.[41]

The term *msgd'* may mean place of prostration, altar or altar precinct, or even cult-stone.[42] Unfortunately, the exact meaning of this term is unclear, and there are no other attestations of *msgd'* at Elephantine. Given the context and the syntax of *TAD* B 7.3, *msgd'* is most readily understood as a deity forming a triad with *ḥrm* and *'nt-yhw*, rather than as a locational designation. This would

38 The appearance of *ḥrm* alone here may provide evidence that this object has been disassociated from the deity with which it was elsewhere connected (*byt'l*). On the evidence for similar phenomenon from Mesopotamia, see Hundley, *Yahweh among the Gods*, 54.

39 It is not clear whether the text is describing an oath that has already been sworn or detailing an oath yet to be sworn.

40 Porten himself raises the interesting suggestion that Menahem may have sworn "by the *msgd'*." However, he prefers to view *bmsgd'* as indicating the location where the oath was sworn.

41 Collin Cornell and Brent A. Strawn suggest that the presence of triads of deities in Judean texts from Elephantine may be due to Egyptian influence, since triadic groupings of deities were especially popular in Egyptian religion. Cornell and Strawn, "Is Judean Religion at Elephantine a Pidgin? Reassessing Its Relationship to Its Antecedents and Congeners," in *Elephantine in Context: Studies on the History, Religion and Literature of the Judeans in Persian Period Egypt*, ed. Reinhard G. Kratz and Bernd U. Schipper, FAT 155 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 162. The triad of Egyptian deities Khnum, Satet, and Anuket is well-attested at Elephantine. See Bernd U. Schipper, "The Judeans/Arameans of Elephantine and Their Religion: An Egyptological Perspective," in Kratz and Schipper, *Elephantine in Context*, 210–211.

42 For the different interpretations of *msgd'*, see Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 155–156. J.T. Milik interprets it as the divinized altar. Milik, "Les papyrus araméens d'Hermoupolis et les cultes syro-phéniciens en Egypte perse," *Bib* 48 (1967): 579–580.

also create an interesting parallel with *ḥrm*, if *ḥrm* is to be understood as a deified object or sacred space belonging to *byt'l*, and *msgd'* is the deified altar or altar precinct. In addition, certain interpretations of *'nt-yhw* would make this an intriguing trio indeed.

The third member of this group of divine oath guarantors, *'nt-yhw*, has been variously interpreted by scholars as an attribute of YHW or as a consort of YHW.[43] Olyan follows William F. Albright's interpretation to argue that *'nt-yhw* should be understood as a deified attribute: "the providence/sign" of YHW.[44] On the other hand, van der Toorn argues that the name designates the West Semitic goddess ʿAnat, known from Ugarit and elsewhere; he claims that the construction *'nt-yhw* identifies *'nt* as the consort of YHW.[45]

However, *'nt*, as found in the noun phrase *'nt-yhw* in this context, is not likely to refer to the West Semitic goddess ʿAnat as YHWH's consort. First, ʿAnat is not attested as the consort of YHWH in other texts. Rather, Asherah is typically the consort of ʾEl, and also of YHWH.[46] In addition, this type of construct chain construction is not normally used to designate a deity's consort. More often, consorts are simply listed independently, or as part of a pair connected by a conjunction. This sort of construction, with a deity name and a following proper noun, is more often used to indicate a manifestation of a deity connected to a particular locale. Evidence from Kuntillet ʿAjrud, for example, uses noun pairs to identify YHWH in particular locations: YHWH (the one of) of Samaria (*yhwh šmrn*), and YHWH (the one of) of Teman (*yhwh tmn*).

Finally, given the fact that *'nt-byt'l* also occurs in papyri from Elephantine, either one must accept that ʿAnat was considered to be the consort of both YHW and the consort of *byt'l* within the same community, which would be unusual, or accept van der Toorn's thesis that YHW and *byt'l* are two names for

43 Milik argues that *'nt* means "time" ("Les papyrus araméens d'Hermoupolis et les cultes syro-phéniciens en Egypte perse," 566–567). See also Albright, "Evolution of the West-Semitic Divinity An-Anat-Attâ," 73–101.

44 Olyan, *Thousand Thousands Served Him*, 96.

45 Van der Toorn argues that ʿAnat was in fact worshiped by Israelites as YHWH's consort, after being introduced into the Northern Kingdom by Arameans who migrated to Samaria at the end of the eighth century BCE. Thus, according to van der Toorn, when the Israelites arrived in Elephantine, coming from a cultural background that included Arameans and Babylonians and other groups who were living in Northern Israel, they were already speaking Aramaic, and worshiping a variety of gods, including *'nt-yhw* ("Anat-Yahu, Some Other Deities, and the Jews of Elephantine," 80–101).

46 See Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*. Asherah is paired with YHWH in the Kuntillet ʿAjrud and Khirbet el-Qom inscriptions, and is paired with the Throne of YHW in column VIII of Papyrus Amherst 63 (discussed below).

the same deity, which the evidence does not make clear. As for the possibility that *ʿnt-yhw* is a compound theonym, it is not common (though not entirely unprecedented) for male and female deities to be compounded in this manner, making this suggestion equally unappealing.[47] These problems are mitigated if *ʿnt* is understood as a deified attribute belonging to the god YHW. The text *TAD* B 7.3 would thus record Menahem swearing his oath by a deified sacred object/space, the deified altar/altar precinct, and the deified sign/providence of YHW.

2.2 *The Cultic Collection Account*

The cultic collection account from Elephantine (*TAD* C 3.15) is one of the most important pieces of evidence for the religious practices of the Judeans there. This accounting text is dated either to the fifth year of Darius II (419 BCE), or, more probably, to the fifth year of Amyrtaeus (400 BCE).[48] The first line of this seven-column document introduces it as a list of contributors from the Judean garrison (*ḥyl' yhwdy'*) who each gave two shekels of silver to "YHW the god."

However, toward the end of the final column of this document the following summary of totals is provided, in which three deities receive offerings:[49]

> for YHW, 12 karsh 6 shekels;
> for *ʾšm-byt'l*, 7 karsh;
> for *ʿnt-byt'l*, silver, 12 karsh.[50]

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47 Contra Porten, who claims that *ʿnt* "blended rather readily with both male and female deities" (*Archives from Elephantine*, 170). The example he cites, Atargatis, is probably a compound of three feminine goddesses (Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, 39).

48 Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 162; Rohrmoser, *Götter, Tempel und Kult der Judäo-Aramäer von Elephantine*, 414. Only the regnal year is stated, but not the name of the king.

49 The purpose of the cultic collection is unclear. Rohrmoser suggests that the silver was intended to be used for cult statuary (*Götter, Tempel und Kult der Judäo-Aramäer von Elephantine*, 195–198). Her thesis better accounts for the quantity of silver collected and the presence of the three deity's names here than suggestions that the silver was destined for the Jerusalem temple, upkeep of the Elephantine temple, or rebuilding the temple, as Collin Cornell points out. Cornell, "Cult Statuary in the Judean Temple at Yeb," *JSJ* 47, no. 3 (2016): 304–305, https://doi.org/10.1163/15700631-12340446.

50 *TAD* C 3.15:126–128. The totals given in these lines do not accord exactly with the figures given in the list. Porten therefore suggests that this papyrus is a "private accounting and not an official record." Alternatively, the ninety-six shekels unaccounted for might have been recorded in previous columns, which are now lost (Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 163–164).

A range of interpretations has been offered for the presence of *ʾšm-byt'l* and *ʿnt-byt'l* here, alongside YHW. Collin Cornell and Brent Strawn, as well as Bernd Schipper, suggest that the presence of this triad of deities in the collection account may be due to Egyptian influence, since triadic groupings of deities, such as Khnum, Satet, and Anuket at Elephantine, were especially popular in Egyptian religion.[51] But who or what are these deities? Some early scholars attempted to explain *ʾšm-byt'l* and *ʿnt-byt'l* as hypostatic forms of YHW: rather than independent gods worshiped alongside YHW, it was proposed that they are lesser divine beings in the service of YHW.[52] Bob Becking similarly argues that *ʾšm-byt'l*, *ʿnt-byt'l*, *ʿnt-yhw*, and *ḥrm-byt'l* should be considered "aspects of the Israelite divine," not independent deities, or elsewhere, that they are cult objects of YHW/*byt'l* that served as minor deities.[53] Conversely, Porten has argued that *ʾšm-byt'l* and *ʿnt-byt'l* were independent deities, along with *ḥrm-byt'l*, but they were Aramean deities that were never worshiped by Judeans.[54] Angela Rohrmoser suggests that *ʾšm-byt'l* and *ʿnt-byt'l* refer to the "betyl of (the god/goddess) Eshem" and the "betyl of (the goddess) Anat," respectively.[55] Gard Granerød, on the other hand, suggests that *ʿnt-yhw* and *ʿnt-byt'l* refer to the goddess Anat as YHW's consort; like van der Toorn, he thinks that Bethel and YHW are different names for the same god at Elephantine.[56] In a different move, Olyan has suggested that the two deities in the collection account, *ʾšm-byt'l* and *ʿnt-byt'l*, should be understood as deified divine attributes that receive cultic devotion: "the name of the temple" and "the providence/sign of the temple," respectively.[57]

Clearly, these entities were treated as deities at Elephantine, since according to the collection account they each receive cultic devotion in the form of silver in significant quantities. What else can be ascertained about them? Concerning the first element in the construct chain *ʾšm-byt'l*, *ʾšm* is usually understood as the common noun meaning *name* written with a prosthetic *aleph*, and is probably related to the North Syrian deity Ashimaʾ mentioned in Aramaic

51 Cornell and Strawn, "Is Judean Religion at Elephantine a Pidgin?," 162; and Schipper, "Judeans/Arameans of Elephantine and Their Religion," 228.

52 See Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 164 and n43, for a summary of this view. The concept of hypostasis has since been recognized as highly problematic (see ch. 1).

53 Becking, *Identity in Persian Egypt*, 38–51.

54 According to Porten, the money collected and given to *ʾšm-byt'l* and *ʿnt-byt'l* in this document may have been "a good-will gesture" toward strictly Aramean cults (*Archives from Elephantine*, 164).

55 Rohrmoser, *Götter, Tempel und Kult der Judäo-Aramäer von Elephantine*, 126–149.

56 Granerød, *Dimensions of Yahwism in the Persian Period*, 250–256.

57 Olyan, *Thousand Thousands Served Him*, 95–96.

inscriptions from Taymāʾ and described in 2 Kgs 17:30 as the deity of the men of Hamath.[58] Van der Toorn also identifies two hymns to this deity in column XVI of Papyrus Amherst 63, in which *ʾš⟨m⟩byt'l* strikes enemies.[59]

The etymology of *ʾšm* is clear: *name* (*šm*) appears elsewhere as a common noun with this meaning in both Aramaic inscriptions and other Northwest Semitic languages, including with the prosthetic *aleph*.[60] As the preceding chapters have shown, name (*šm*) is also occasionally treated as a deity across the ancient Near East. Not only does it appear as a theophoric element, either alone or in construct phrases such as "name of ʾEl" or "name of father" in personal names from places such as Mari, Tuttul, Alalakh, Aleppo, and Ugarit, as well as in Phoenician and Hebrew names, Name is also attested as a deity at sites ranging from Ebla to Kuntillet ʿAjrud.[61]

Moreover, examples of temple names characterized as deities may support the interpretation of *ʾšm-byt'l* as the deified name of *byt'l*, understood as "temple," "house of El," or "standing stone." As discussed in chapter 2, during the Neo-Babylonian period in Mesopotamia, temple names occur as theophoric elements in personal names: for example, Esagila-zer-ibni and Eanna-šar-uṣur, which have as theophoric elements the names of the temple of Marduk and

58 For an overview of the history of scholarship on *ʾšm* and Ashima, see Thomas, "Eshem and Ashima,'" 5–7. On the inscriptions from Taymāʾ, see Beyer and Livingstone, "Die neuesten aramäischen Inschriften aus Taima," 285–296; and Peter Stein, "Ein aramäischer Kudurru aus Taymāʾ?," in *Babylonien und seine Nachbarn in neu- und spätbabylonischer Zeit*, ed. Manfred Krebernik and Hans Neumann, AOAT 369 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2014), 219–245.

59 See van der Toorn, "Eshem-Bethel and Herem-Bethel," 670, 672, 674. He reconstructs *ʾš⟨m⟩byt'l* in Papyrus Amherst 63 XVI 1, 14, and 15, restoring a *mem* he thinks has been elided. Based on this document, van der Toorn characterizes this deity as a "warrior god armed with bow and hammer" for whom "fire is the distinctive attribute." His interpretation connects this deity with the Mesopotamian deity Ishum.

60 For a thorough discussion of the etymology and meaning of *ʾšm*, see Thomas, "Eshem and Ashima" 23–28. See also the discussion in ch. 7.

61 ʿAṯtartu is also referred to as "ʿAṯtartu, name of Baʾlu" or "ʿAṯtartu of Baʾlu's name" (*ṯtrt šm b'l*) in the Kirta Epic and the Baʿlu Cycle from Ugarit (*KTU* 1.16.6:54–57 and *KTU* 1.2.1:7–8), as well as in an Egyptian stela from the fifteenth century, and in a fifth century Phoenician inscription (*KAI* 14:18). See Wilson-Wright, *Athtart*, 133–134. Based on this evidence, Thomas argues that "a *šm* deity seems to have been well established in Syro-Palestinian religion already by the Middle Bronze Age." However, he interprets *šm* not as "name," but as "son, heir, offspring," claiming that the "usual meaning … does not make sense in this context" ("Eshem and Ashima," 26). On the contrary, this chapter argues that in the context of the common ancient Near Eastern tendency to deify objects, qualities, and attributes, it makes perfect sense to understand this noun in its usual sense of *name*. However, it is important to note that these examples across the ancient Near East may not refer to the same deity or the same name.

Ištar, respectively.[62] The temple of Baʿlu may also receive cultic devotion at Ugarit.[63] If named temples were characterized as deities, deifying the name as well is not a far stretch. Thus, it would not be surprising for the Name of the deified temple or cult stela *byt'l* to receive cultic devotion here, though in this case it is the term for *name* rather than the proper name itself.

As for *ʿnt-byt'l*, many of the same arguments that make the thesis that *ʿnt-yhw* was considered YHW's consort unappealing apply here as well. It is unlikely that *ʿnt* would be viewed as the consort of both *byt'l* and YHW, and there is no clear evidence that the latter two deities were equated in Elephantine. Moreover, this deity also occurs outside of Elephantine. In the treaty of Esarhaddon with Baʿal of Tyre, *byt'l* and *ʿnt-byt'l* occur together as agents of a curse. This does not, however, indicate that *ʿnt-byt'l* was viewed as *byt'l's* consort: subsequent curses in the treaty are invoked by a series of three manifestations of Baʿal, and a pair of male gods.[64] None of them constitute a consort pair. Finally, *ʾšm-byt'l* and *ʿnt-byt'l* do not seem to be considered subordinate to YHW in this collection account, since they receive large amounts of the collected silver. In fact, *ʿnt-byt'l* receives almost the same amount as YHW.

3 Theophoric Personal Names from Elephantine

Personal names in the Aramaic documents from Elephantine offer another type of evidence for analyzing these deities. Most of the personal names in the Elephantine corpus are theophoric.[65] Though it is important to keep in mind that many factors affect name-giving, such as paponymy or a preference for traditional names, theophoric names can be an important source of information about the religious beliefs and practices of the name-givers and their communities.

The sections above analyzed the occurrences of *ʾšm-byt'l*, *ḥrm*, *ḥrm-byt'l*, *ʿnt-byt'l*, and *ʿnt-yhw* in oaths and a cultic collection account from Elephantine. It was also noted that some of the personal names in the Aramaic corpus from

62 Noted by Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 168.

63 See the discussion of RS 24.249 in ch. 6.

64 See the discussion in ch. 7.

65 According to Silverman's analysis of the proper names recorded in the Aramaic documents from Elephantine, over 90 percent of the names belonging to Judeans are theophoric, while only 8.8 percent are nonreligious (*Religious Values in the Jewish Proper Names at Elephantine*, 195, 208). Theophoric names may contain either a deity's proper name (such as YH(W) or Nabu) or a common noun used as a substitute, such as *ʾb*, *ʾḥ*, or *ḥm*.

Elephantine have *ʾšm*, *byt'l*, *ḥrm*, or *ʿnt* in theophoric position.[66] Among these documents, there are four names that contain *ʾšm*, twelve with *byt'l*, four with *ḥrm*, and one with *ʿnt*. What do they indicate about the beliefs of the parents of their holders? Did they belong to the community of Judeans at Elephantine, or to some other group? If some Judeans chose to give their children names containing these elements because of the religious values that they expressed, then these names provide further information about how these deities were conceptualized within the Judean community.

The use of *ʾšm*, *byt'l*, *ḥrm*, and *ʿnt* in theophoric position, indicates, first, that some persons at Elephantine chose to use these elements in the same way that other deities' names were used in anthroponyms at Elephantine. But did Judeans have names with *ʾšm*, *byt'l*, *ḥrm*, or *ʿnt* in theophoric position, or did only Arameans or other groups give their children names with these elements? Previous scholarship is divided on this question. On the one hand, Porten argues that these names are exclusively Aramean, based on the assumption that the Judeans of Elephantine were monotheistic Jews who worshiped YHW exclusively, and therefore would not give their children names with these elements.[67] On the other hand, Michael Silverman's study of the onomasticon of Elephantine attested in the Aramaic documents concludes precisely the opposite: by analyzing the available evidence for the patronyms of the names containing *ʾšm*, *byt'l*, *ḥrm*, or *ʿnt*, he finds that a minimum of 53.4 percent of names that have these elements in theophoric position can be demonstrated to belong to Judeans.[68] In fact, Silverman ends up classifying all the names containing *ʾšm*, *byt'l*, *ḥrm*, or *ʿnt* as ethnically Judean, along with names containing the elements YH/YHW, *ʾl*, *ʾb*, *ʾḥ*, and *ḥm*. He bases this classification on linguistic criteria and the theophoric or divine elements.[69] In short, he classifies certain linguistically Hebrew, Aramaic, or Hebrew-Aramaic names as Judean,

66 For comprehensive lists of the occurrence of these names, see Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, appendix V; and Silverman, *Religious Values in the Jewish Proper Names at Elephantine*, 135–137, 148, 166, and 168. In the personal names from Elephantine, the theophoric element comes before the nontheophoric element in both verbal sentence and nominal sentence name types, except in cases where the name is both masculine and the divine element is YH/YHW (Silverman, *Religious Values in the Jewish Proper Names at Elephantine*, 111).

67 Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 149.

68 Silverman, *Religious Values in the Jewish Proper Names at Elephantine*, 223.

69 Silverman distinguishes between a "theophorous" element, which he defines as a "noun or adjective that may have undergone hypostasis, but does not appear in documents as the name of a specific deity" and a "divine" element, which he categorizes as a "historically attested appellative of a specific deity" (*Religious Values in the Jewish Proper Names at Elephantine*, 210).

since Hebrew and Aramaic were the primary languages spoken by the Judeans of Elephantine, and "based upon the provenience of the theophorous/divine elements: *regardless of whether their ultimate origin is, or is not Jewish, if they are attested in any way in Jewish contexts, names compounded with them are to be thought Jewish*."[70] Thus, since *ʾšm-byt'l* and *ʿnt-byt'l* occur in a Judean cultic collection account, and *ḥrm* and *ʿnt-yhw* seem to occur together in an oath, he considers these elements as Judean.

Although Silverman is correct in pointing out that the names containing *ʾšm*, *byt'l*, *ḥrm*, or *ʿnt* are likely to belong to Judeans, his interpretation of the meaning of these theophoric elements suffers from the presupposition that the Judeans of Elephantine were Yahwistic monotheists. Thus, Silverman interprets the increasing tendency of Judeans to use *ʾšm*, *byt'l*, *ḥrm*, or *ʿnt* in proper names not as demonstrating that some Judeans gave religious attention to other deities besides YHW, but as representing a desire to substitute other nouns for the name of YHW. Based on his assessment of the names belonging to Judeans containing YHW or YH as "typologically early," and those containing the divine element *byt'l*, or the theophorous elements *ʾšm*, *ḥrm*, or *ʿnt* as "typologically late," Silverman concludes that the increase in usage of the latter types of names reflects a "continuing attempt to reduce the degree of close proximity of the Deity and the name-bearer."[71]

Though it does seem that these elements tend to occur, both in proper names and in the oaths and cultic collection account, increasingly toward the end of the fifth century, there is no evidence that supports the idea that these nouns developed as substitutes for the proper name of YHW. Rather, in the cultic collection account, discussed above, *ʾšm-byt'l* and *ʿnt-byt'l* are recorded alongside YHW, and receive almost equal quantities of silver. Such entities also function as deities in oaths, as discussed above. This does not support the sugges-

70 Silverman, *Religious Values in the Jewish Proper Names at Elephantine*, 13 (emphasis original). In other words, Silverman classifies as "Jewish" names whose "etymological language is Hebrew or Aramaic (the two languages spoken by Jews) and whose theophorous/divine elements, or surrogates thereof, are employed by Jews" (191). This amounts to a total of 70.8 percent of all the names in the documents (194).

71 Silverman, *Religious Values in the Jewish Proper Names at Elephantine*, 282–283: "The divine element *byt'l* and the theophorous elements *ʾšm*, *ḥrm*, and *ʿnt* may be understood as the cultic concepts, respectively, of 'temple, sacrifice, ban', and 'song' that have been hypostatized and personalized. Thereby they may serve as surrogates for God, or be considered lesser quasi-divine beings in His retinue. In either case they may be thought intermediaries between God and man. Thus, their increased popularity in the later periods may also reflect this desire to avoid 'profane' use of the Divine Name, for instead of uttering the Name of God, one would employ those of His ministers."

tion that these were substitute names used to avoid utilizing the proper name YHW. Clearly, Judeans, like other groups in Elephantine at the time, acknowledged several deities.

4 Papyrus Amherst 63

Papyrus Amherst 63 is an Aramaic text written in demotic script dating to the fourth century BCE. The text is arranged into twenty-three columns on a three-and-a-half-meter-long scroll, which is unprovenanced but said to be from a cache of papyri discovered near Thebes.[72] The papyrus is an anthology or compilation of texts primarily dealing with rituals associated with the New Year.[73] The identity and origin of the group or groups who collected these texts in this unusual format is uncertain, though it may be linked to Elephantine, which is the only Egyptian location mentioned by name in the text.[74] Whatever its ultimate origins, it seems clear that this collection of cultic material and narrative, which draws on traditions from Mesopotamia, Syria, the Levant, and Egypt, was brought together by Arameans in Egypt.[75]

In addition to the possible attestations of *ʾš⟨m⟩byt'l* and *ḥr⟨m⟩byt'l* in Papyrus Amherst 63 discussed above, yet another intriguing entity appears in line 7 of column VIII. The "Throne of YHW" is one of "all the gods" hailing from a

72 For introductions to Papyrus Amherst 63, see van der Toorn, *Papyrus Amherst 63*, 1–40; Holm, "Sacrifice and Feasting in Papyrus Amherst 63," 135–169; and Holm, *Aramaic Literary Texts*.

73 Holm, "Sacrifice and Feasting in Papyrus Amherst 63," 135–140; van der Toorn, *Papyrus Amherst 63*, 25.

74 Some scholars have identified a single community, perhaps from the place referred to as "Rash" in the papyrus, as the producer of the texts contained in the papyrus. See Sven P. Vleeming and Jan Willem Wesselius, *Studies in Papyrus Amherst 63: Essays on the Aramaic Texts in Aramaic-demotic Papyrus Amherst 63* (Amsterdam: Juda Palache Instituut, 1985); and Richard C. Steiner, "The Aramaic Text in Demotic Script: The Liturgy of a New Year's Festival Imported from Bethel to Syene by Exiles from Rash," *JAOS* 111, no. 2 (1991): 362–363, https://doi.org/10.2307/604026. Conversely, van der Toorn identifies three different communities who contributed to the papyrus: columns I–V stem from Arameans from Babylon, columns VI–XI from a Syrian community from Hamath, and columns XII–XIII from Israelites from Samaria. He theorizes that columns XIV–XVII are the result of these three ethnic communities coming together in the oasis city of Palmyra in the Syrian Desert during the seventh century BCE, and then moving together to Elephantine and Syene (*Papyrus Amherst 63*, 8–20). For Elephantine, see Holm, "Sacrifice and Feasting in Papyrus Amherst 63," 142. Holm also suggests that the Throne of YHW that appears in column VIII may be a reference to the temple of YHW at Elephantine (143).

75 Holm, "Sacrifice and Feasting in Papyrus Amherst 63," 136.

variety of locales who will bestow blessings on the unnamed addressee.[76] This entity is listed second-to-last in the list, after the Lord and the Lady, Baʿal, Pidray, Bel, Belet, Nabu, and Nanay. The Throne of YHW is paired with Asherah; this pair will bless the addressee from the south. Interestingly, this is the only pair to enact their blessing from the same locale. The following lines describe the burning of offerings and incense and the sprinkling of the stela of the Lord.[77] The throne is portrayed both acting as and receiving treatment appropriate to a deity here. Based on some biblical parallels, Tawny Holm proposes that the Throne of YHW refers to a temple, perhaps even the temple of YHW at Elephantine.[78] Regardless, it gives a blessing, and presumably receives some of the offerings described in the following lines.[79] The Throne of YHW thus provides further evidence of an item, or perhaps a temple, belonging to a deity being treated as a deity itself in the Aramaic evidence from Egypt.

5 Objects of Trust in the Hebrew Bible

Though there are many examples of personification as a figurative literary device in the Hebrew Bible, it does not contain a wealth of evidence concerning objects, qualities, or attributes as deities. However, there are several texts that may be understood in this light, particularly against the background of the other material discussed in this chapter: specifically, the references to the objects of Israel's trust in Jer 48:13 and 7:4–14.

In Jer 7:4–14, the prophet prophesies the destruction of the temple of YHWH referring to it as the "house (*bayît*) … in which you trust." In Jer 48:13, we find

76 For editions of this passage, see Tawny L. Holm, "Papyrus Amherst 63 and the Arameans of Egypt: A Landscape of Cultural Nostalgia," in Kratz and Schipper, *Elephantine in Context*, 323–324; van der Toorn, *Papyrus Amherst 63*, 56; and Steiner and Nims, "Aramaic Text in Demotic Script," 23. Note that Steiner reads this phrase differently, as "Throne of Horus" (*krs*(*y*)-*ḥr*), suggesting that the phrase refers to the goddess Isis as "a personification of the royal throne."

77 It is interesting to note that in line 16 of column IV, incense is burned for the throne of the Lady, who appears to be identified as Nanay.

78 Holm, "Papyrus Amherst 63 and the Arameans of Egypt," 325. She compares this phrase to "throne of YHWH" (*ks' yhwh*) in Jer 3:17, which refers to the temple in Jerusalem.

79 Contra van der Toorn, who suggests that this "enigmatic phrase" implies that "Yaho is represented by a throne, the God himself being an invisible presence," despite acknowledging that deified thrones (*mwtb*) appear in Nabatean inscriptions, as discussed in Jacob Hoftijzer, *Religio aramaica: Godsdienstige verschijnselen in Aramese teksten* (Leiden: Ex Oriente Lux, 1968), 23 (van der Toorn, *Papyrus Amherst 63*, 127).

the prophesy: "And Moab will be ashamed of Kemosh just as the community of Israel has been ashamed of Bethel, their trust" (*ûbōš mô'āb mikkĕmôš ka'ăšer-bōšû bêt yiśrā'ēl mibbêt'ēl mibṭĕḥām*). Bethel here, as the object of Israel's "trust," could very well be a divinized temple or standing stone.[80] The comparison between the Israelites' trust in Bethel with the Moabites' worship of their national deity indicates that this entity was considered to be on equal standing for some group that was part of Israel, as Kemosh was for the Moabites.

Perhaps the Judeans of Elephantine preserved a tradition that had its roots in preexilic ancient Israel, but which did not find a place in the biblical writers' theological programs. Alternatively, as Aren Wilson-Wright argues, the writer of this passage in Jeremiah may have been familiar with the religious practices of the Judeans living in Upper Egypt, and retrojected them onto the Northern Kingdom as part of the writer's polemic.[81] Either way, this biblical writer was clearly familiar with, and disapproved, of such a practice.[82]

6 Observations on the Aramaic Documents from Egypt and the Hebrew Bible

This chapter has analyzed the evidence for objects, qualities, and attributes as deities in the Aramaic documents concerning the Judeans of Elephantine, Papyrus Amherst 63, and the book of Jeremiah. The analysis herein demonstrates that it is highly probable that *ʾšm-byt'l*, *ḥrm-byt'l*, *ʿnt-byt'l*, and *ʿnt-yhw* are deified possessions or attributes of the gods *byt'l* and YHW, respectively, and that at least one biblical writer was aware that *byt'l* was recognized as a deity to whom cultic attention is given by some groups. Papyrus Amherst 63 also attests the deified Throne of YHW. These deities act as guarantors for oaths, receive offerings, and bestow blessings, evidence that they were conceptualized as agents.

It is important to note that there is no evidence that these deities were alternative designations for YHW, hypostases, or that these entities were only worshiped by non-Judeans. The only reason to argue for such conceptions is to reconcile the Elephantine evidence with the religious systems of the

80 Olyan interprets this verse as referencing "the temple (generically understood), which appears to have been divinized and viewed as an object of 'trust' by at least some Israelites" (*Thousand Thousands Served Him*, 95).

81 Wilson-Wright, *Jeremiah's Egypt*, 144–146.

82 The disapproval expressed in Jer 48:13 also provides support contra the claim the *byt'l* and YHWH/YHW were identified as the same deity, as noted above.

Deuteronomistic biblical texts, or the tenets of later Judaism. Instead, it is clear that though the Judeans at Elephantine clearly had a particular preference for YHW, based on the temple built for his worship and the preponderance of theophoric names with YH, at least some of them also recognized other deities. Understood in the context of this common ancient Near Eastern phenomena, the Judeans in Elephantine, the Arameans who were responsible for some of the content of Papyrus Amherst 63, and probably at least some people in ancient Israel and Judah, would have been right at home with their predecessors in the Bronze and Iron Ages in including objects, attributes, and qualities in their pantheons.

CHAPTER 9

Understanding Objects, Qualities, and Attributes as Deities

The preceding chapters examined a number of objects, qualities, and attributes that are treated as deities in texts from across the ancient Near East, dating from the third millennium through the Persian period. These entities are treated as deities in several ways: some receive cultic devotion, such as offerings; some are labeled as deities through the use of the divine determinative or terminology specific to deities; some are included in lists of deities; and some take on the roles of superhuman agents in texts or personal names. Some of the evidence, such as certain anthroponyms that describe their actions or texts in which they are asked to enact curses or preside over oaths, explicitly describes these deities as active agents, capable of helping or harming human beings. Other sources, especially texts in which these deities receive offerings, imply that they are characterized as cognizant agents. The agency that can be inferred from such texts is humanlike to the extent that these deities are constructed as desiring and capable of responding favorably (though in superhuman ways) to gifts, usually ones that are similar to those a human would appreciate. After all, it makes little sense to give offerings to an entity that cannot recognize it and potentially respond reciprocally.

These deities are treated similarly to deities with humanlike forms. Objects, qualities, and attributes receive offerings of similar types, and sometimes similar quantities, as anthroform gods and goddesses. At Ugarit, for example, Censer and Lyre receive the same offering (a ram) as most of the other deities in the lists in which they appear. When objects or qualities occur in theophoric position in anthroponyms, these names tend to make similar statements about them as other deities that appear as theophoric elements. For example, some personal names attribute functions appropriate to deities to these entities. At Emar, *dārû* is called upon to hear and presumably to answer a prayer: *Šime-dārû* ("Hear—Eternal!").[1] They are often paired with another noun to form nominal sentences in which they are called king, lord, or deity, or in which the name-holder is designated as the servant of the deity.

Many of the same objects, qualities, and attributes are found in texts from numerous different locations and across a range of time periods. Yet, ancient

1 Pruzsinszky, *Die Personennamen der Texte aus Emar*, 214.

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Near Eastern pantheons did have limits. Not everything was deified. Objects, qualities, and attributes that are treated as deities are often possessions, qualities, or attributes commonly associated with divinity, royalty, or religious practices: cultic objects, gods' weapons, crowns, temples and their parts, and qualities or attributes associated with deities or kings. Objects, qualities, and attributes also constitute a relatively small percentage of the deities that are the object of devotion in various ancient Near Eastern religious systems; they are rare when compared to the quantity of gods and goddesses that are more humanlike in form. Though it appears that these types of entities could occasionally play more major roles in some of these religions, for the most part, these entities tend to take on more minor roles. Nevertheless, the evidence collected in the chapters above demonstrates that these deities constitute a significant feature of ancient Near Eastern religious systems, more so than has previously been recognized.

A number of questions arise when trying to understand such deities. What does the inclusion of objects, qualities, and attributes reveal about the construction of the category of DEITY in the ancient Near East? How do these deities compare to gods and goddesses that are imagined in humanlike form? What features do they share in common with anthroform deities? Why are they attested less frequently? Why and how were certain objects, qualities, and attributes deified?

This chapter explores the ways in which cognitive approaches can help answer these questions and contribute to a better understanding of the deification of objects, qualities, and attributes.[2] For example, cognitive linguistic approaches to the study of categorization highlight the ways in which ancient and modern categories, such as the category of DEITY, are formed and how they function. Such an approach suggests an alternative to assuming that ancient and modern modes of categorization are radically different, as has sometimes been proposed. In the same vein, research in the cognitive science of religion (CSR) shows that instead of demonstrating fundamental differences between the minds and cognition of ancient people and modern scholars, both concepts of deity that include objects, qualities, and attributes and concepts of deity that focus on beings with humanlike forms are actually produced by and trigger the same mental mechanisms. Understanding these mechanisms helps

2 Other recent studies have profitably used cognitive science to examine ancient Near Eastern religious phenomena. Three particularly illuminating examples of such work are Pongratz-Leisten and Sonik, "Between Cognition and Culture," 3–69; Maiden, *Cognitive Science and Ancient Israelite Religion*; and Daniel O. McClellan, *YHWH's Divine Images: A Cognitive Approach*, ANEM 29 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2022).

to highlight the important similarities between these different conceptualizations of deity, while also helping to explain why deified objects, qualities, and attributes tend to be less popular than gods or goddesses with humanlike forms. Cognitive science of religion thus provides useful and persuasive explanations for the development of deity concepts, including deified objects, qualities, and attributes, that helps to demystify and deexoticize ancient conceptions of deity.

1 DEITY as a Fuzzy Category

At first glance, deified objects, qualities, and attributes can seem quite strange to the modern reader. Some scholars have posited radical differences between ancient and modern methods of categorization to explain how ancient thinkers could have included such entities in the category of DEITY. For example, Selz has argued that there is a difference between the "ontological essentialism" of "modern Western reasoning" and the "fuzzy borders of Mesopotamian categorization."[3] Michael Hundley theorizes that "ancient Near Eastern people tend to focus on individual aspects … at the expense of overall consistency," while "a perspectival approach, more characteristic of the modern West, focuses on the larger organic whole." Thus, he claims, "Mesopotamian deities are characterized by a fluidity that, to the modern mind, is maddeningly inconsistent or embarrassingly primitive," but "the ANE thinker would find [modern] categorizations maddeningly restrictive or, worse, the height of hubris."[4] It is instead argued below that hard, either-or distinctions are characteristic of neither modern Western nor ancient categories. As scholars have increasingly emphasized, the ancient evidence suggests that the boundaries between deities and other superhuman beings, or even between deities and humans, are fuzzy and porous, rather than clear and distinct.[5] Moreover, as discussed in chapter 1, scholars acknowledge that the ancient category of DEITY is a relative category, in which not all members share the same status or centrality. But, is the assumption that ancient Near Eastern categories are fuzzier or less clearly defined than modern ones warranted?

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3 Selz, "On the Beginnings of Mesopotamian 'Theology,'" 413–415.

4 Hundley, *Yahweh among the Gods*, 12–13. Hundley's use of aspect theory is problematic not only because of the lack of evidence concerning these radical differences in cognition, but also because Hundley is following the work of a theorist (Brunner-Traut) who, though Hundley distances himself from these aspects of her work, compares ancient Near Eastern people to children and the mentally ill.

5 See the discussion in ch. 1.

Recent research in cognitive linguistics on categorization helps to answer this question. Indeed, cognitive approaches suggest that fuzziness is a characteristic of conceptual and linguistic categories in both ancient and modern human thought. Instead of supporting the classical model, which posits that something belongs to a category if, and only if, it has certain necessary and sufficient attributes that all category-members share in equally, decades of research by cognitive psychologists and linguists have demonstrated that human beings tend to perceive categories as fuzzily bounded and graded.[6] This builds on the Wittgensteinian notion that human conceptual categories are flexible and blurry and tend to exhibit a family resemblance structure.[7] The idea that categories are fuzzy has already had a substantial impact on both religious studies and ancient Near Eastern studies. Many theorists of religion now argue that RELIGION is a fuzzily bounded category that is best defined polythetically;[8] scholars working on diverse topics in ancient Near Eastern studies have also recognized the benefits of such an approach, both for freeing their own etic categories from the "theoretical and terminological straightjacket" of monothetic definitions,[9] and for understanding ancient Near Eastern categories.[10]

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6 One famous example of the classical model is Aristotle's definition of MAN as a "two-footed animal" (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1037). According to this classical theory, any and all animals that possess the attribute of two-footedness should be considered to share equally in MAN-hood, while any being that does not possess both these qualifications cannot be part of the category of MAN. This is clearly extremely problematic, and does not describe ancient Greek, or anyone else's, use of categories in daily life. For a more in-depth discussion of the problems with the classical model and the benefits of newer approaches to categorization, see Jennifer Elizabeth Singletary, "Incomparable or Prototypical: Yahweh among the Gods in the Hebrew Bible," in *With the Loyal You Show Yourself Loyal: Essays on Relationships in the Hebrew Bible in Honor of Saul M. Olyan*, ed. T.M. Lemos, Jordan D. Rosenblum, Karen B. Stern, and Debra Scoggins Ballentine, AIL 42 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2021), 401–416, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1hp5hcq.28.

7 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), § 66.

8 Ninian Smart proposed a family resemblance definition for religion already in the late 1950s. Smart, "Numen, Nirvana, and the Definition of Religion," *CQR* 160 (1959): 216–225. A polythetic approach was later popularized by Jonathan Z. Smith in his work, including his polythetic definition for Judaism. See Smith, "Fences and Neighbors: Some Contours of Early Judaism," in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 1–18, https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226841861-003. This model continues to be adopted by many scholars; for example, see Jeppe Sinding Jensen's explicitly polythetic definition in Jensen, *What Is Religion?* (London: Routledge, 2014), 8–9.

9 Nissinen, *Ancient Prophecy*, 20.

10 For example, see Francesca Rochberg, who references Paula Wapnish's thesis regarding the polythetic nature of Sumerian and Akkadian classification to argue that the use of determinatives in cuneiform reflects polythetic classification (*Before Nature*, 99). See also Wapnish, "Animal Names and Animal Classifications in Mesopotamia: An Interdis-

In addition, cognitive approaches to categorization elucidate another important feature of both ancient and modern categories. The prototype theory of categories suggests membership in categories is perceived as graded: various members in a category are understood as "better" or "worse" exemplars of their categories, depending on how representative of the category they are considered to be within a given social and cultural context.[11] Category members thus have varying degrees of typicality, sharing to differing extents some, but not all, of the features considered characteristic of the category. In short, some members are perceived as more prototypical exemplars of a category than others, particularly when they clearly display the greatest quantity of characteristics considered to be important attributes of a category and a minimum number of attributes characteristic of contrasting categories.[12]

This approach views categorization as a result of basic human cognitive and psychological processes and mechanisms that are assumed to have remained constant for millennia, such as biological capacities, the drive for cognitive economy, and the principle that the world is perceived as having structure.[13] Yet, it also recognizes that specific conceptual and linguistic categories, their constituents, and their members' perceived relative typicality are determined by their context within a particular culture and encoded by that culture's language at a historical point in time. In other words, an item's membership and perceived representativeness within a category may be learned, and sometimes even explicitly taught by cultural leaders and influencers, though the latter do not themselves invent the categories.[14]

For example, ideas about what constitutes a "real man," a "real whisky," or indeed, a "real god" (in other words, the more prototypical members of these

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ciplinary Approach Based on Folk Taxonomy," PhD diss., Columbia University, 1985. Selz, Grinevald, and Goldwasser also stress the "importance of the application of state-of-the-art methods from … contemporary typological and cognitive linguistics" for understanding ancient classificatory systems ("Question of Sumerian 'Determinatives,'" 282).

11 As expounded in the seminal work of Eleanor Rosch and Carolyn B. Mervis.

12 Eleanor Rosch, "Principles of Categorization," in *Cognition and Categorization*, ed. Eleanor Rosch and Barbara B. Lloyd (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum Associates, 1978), 30. Additional research has demonstrated that a prototype is not necessarily a particular item existing in the world, but may be a "cognitive representation, which is generally associated with a particular word and serves as a reference point for categorization …. This mental picture is not necessarily the representation of a realistic example of a given category, but rather an abstract entity that involves some combination of related typical features." Anastasia Giannakopoulou, "Prototype Theory: An Evaluation," *Ecologa Online Journal* (2003): 4, https://uobrep.openrepository.com/handle/10547/625850.

13 Rosch, "Principles of Categorization," 29–30.

14 Rosch, 41.

categories), is determined by cultural and social contexts, and reinforced by culturally dominant parties or influencers.[15] This way of understanding categories has not only proven to be a far better fit for experimental evidence concerning modern categorization,[16] it also better fits the ancient evidence. Prototype theory has already proved useful for analyzing ancient modes of classification, especially determinatives, in ancient languages, and can also help illuminate the category under discussion here.[17] To summarize, the idea that the category of DEITY, like other ancient and modern categories, is fuzzy, polythetic, and composed of members perceived as having varying degrees of prototypicality or representativeness is both an apt theory for explaining the ancient evidence and is supported by recent research into human cognition.

In other words, ancient categories are no more slippery than modern ones. Furthermore, prototype theory highlights another commonality between the ancient conception of the category of DEITY and the modern one: human-like deities are clearly more common and prominent, and thus perceived as more prototypical, in both. Though objects, qualities, and attributes could also be included in this category in the ancient Near East, they are far less frequently attested than anthroform deities. Rather, they occupy the blurry edges of this category, often slipping in and out of it. That anthroform deities are more prototypical cross-culturally supports the findings of cognitive scientists, who suggest that people rely on "default modes of reasoning about actual agents—

15 See Porter for the debate about what is or is not a "real god," and what exactly such a phrase implies, that came up among the contributors to her edited volume ("Introduction," 11).

16 See the foundational experiments in Eleanor Rosch, "Natural Categories," *Cognitive Psychology* 4, no. 3 (1973): 328–350, https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0285(73)90017-0; Rosch, "Cognitive Representations of Semantic Categories," *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 104, no. 3 (1975): 192–233, https://doi.org/10.1037/0096-3445.104.3.192; Rosch and Carolyn B. Mervis, "Family Resemblances: Studies in the Internal Structure of Categories," *Cognitive Psychology* 7, no. 4 (1975): 573–605, https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0285(75)90024-9; Rosch et al., "Basic Objects in Natural Categories," *Cognitive Psychology* 8, no. 3 (1976): 382–439, https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0285(76)90013-X. See also later experimental studies such as J. David Smith and John Paul Minda, "Distinguishing Prototype-based and Exemplar-based Processes in Dot-pattern Category Learning," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition* 28, no. 4 (2002): 800–811, https://doi.org/10.1037/0278-7393.28.4.800; and Holly Zajac Gastgeb et al., "Category Formation in Autism: Can Individuals with Autism Form Categories and Prototypes of Dot Patterns?," *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 42, no. 8 (2012): 1694–1704, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-011-1411-x.

17 For determinatives, see, for example, Goldwasser, *Prophets, Lovers and Giraffes*; and Shalomi-Hen, *Writing of Gods*. Its usefulness for understanding DEITY is also suggested by Selz, "Divine Prototypes."

specifically *human* beings—to talk about gods' perceptual abilities."[18] This may be one reason why deified objects, qualities, and attributes are less prominently attested in the ancient Near East. Anthroform god concepts automatically trigger ideas about agency; more effort is required to trigger these mental systems for nonanthroform concepts of deities.

2 Understanding Anthroform and Nonanthroform Concepts of Deity

The preceding chapters focused on objects, qualities, and attributes as deities in individual textual and historical contexts from sites in the ancient Near East. Why did the ancient producers of these texts include these seemingly unusual deities? Because the prototypical model for the category of DEITY that dominates both ancient and modern thinking about deities is humanoid, scholars tend to compare deified objects, qualities, and attributes with conceptions of anthroform gods and goddesses. These two visions of deity may appear quite disparate. Scholars have struggled to explain these diverse deity concepts, sometimes resorting to positing differences in ancient and modern cognition to explain them.[19] Yet, evolutionary psychologists have shown that radical changes in human cognition over the past few thousand years are extremely unlikely.[20] Indeed, scholars suggest that modern human cognition was already fully developed by at least forty thousand years ago.[21]

As Brett Maiden points out, "an up-to-date view of the mind may … help bridge the gap between ancient and modern minds and thus render ancient religious texts and phenomena a little less distant, a little less alien."[22] The cognitive science of religion offers a way to understand this phenomenon with attention to the mind, though it should be stressed that even cognitive scientists admit that "all explanations are partial explanations."[23] The pri-

18 Benjamin Grant Purzycki, "Gods: Cognition, Culture, and Ecology," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Cognitive Science of Religion*, ed. Justin L. Barrett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 79, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190693350.013.4.

19 See the examples discussed in ch. 2.

20 See John Tooby and Leda Cosmides, "The Psychological Foundations of Culture," in *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture*, ed. Jerome H. Barkow, Leda Cosmides, and John Tooby (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 19–136; Jamie C. Confer et al., "Evolutionary Psychology: Controversies, Questions, Prospects, and Limitations," *American Psychologist* 65 (2010): 110–126, https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018413.

21 Vedeler, "Ancient Near Eastern Omens and Prophecies as a Function of Cognitive Modes," 96n11.

22 Maiden, *Cognitive Science and Ancient Israelite Religion*, 4.

23 Robert N. McCauley, "Reduction: Models of Cross-Scientific Relations and Their Implica-

mary focus of CSR is to offer cognitive explanations for widespread, cross-culturally occurring religious ideas.[24] More specifically, "what distinguishes CSR from traditional interpretive and sociological approaches is its insistence on seeking explanations of religion from the science of human cognition."[25] One extremely widespread idea among human beings is the concept of deities and other superhuman beings. Examining how and why the human mind tends to produce and transmit these concepts can help explain why both gods with humanlike forms and nonanthroform deities could coexist in the imaginations of ancient thinkers; because deity concepts are influenced by both cultural context and cognitive mechanisms: "gods are cultural representations (i.e., shared, socially transmitted data) that are made possible, informed, and constrained by noncultural cognitive systems."[26] Conversely, the historical data from ancient Near Eastern sources provides additional opportunities to test theories from CSR, which can in turn lead to further nuancing of these theories.

The cognitive science of religion offers a perspective on the production of deity concepts in general that helps to explain how objects, qualities, and attributes were deified. As this section demonstrates, anthroform gods and goddesses and deified objects, qualities, and attributes are products of the same basic mental mechanisms and templates and become enduring religious concepts for similar reasons. Both types of deity concepts are, according to this approach, "natural."[27] In order to explain how human conceptions of deity can include objects, qualities, and attributes as well as gods with humanlike forms, it is critical to understand why and how human beings develop deity concepts at all. The cognitive science of religion seeks to explain deity concepts as products of human cognition, because, like all ideas, "'gods' are the natural products

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tions for the Psychology-Neuroscience Interface," in *Philosophy of Psychology and Cognitive Science*, ed. Paul Thagard (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 2007), 150, https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-044451540-7/50021-9.

24 Justin L. Barrett, "Cognitive Science of Religion: What Is It and Why Is It?," *Religion Compass* 1.6 (2007): 768–786, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8171.2007.00042.x.

25 Aku Visala, "Philosophical Foundations of Cognitive Science of Religion," in Barrett, *Oxford Handbook of the Cognitive Science of Religion*, 27, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190693350.013.2.

26 Purzycki, "Gods," 67.

27 On the naturalness of religious concepts according to CSR, see Pascal Boyer, *The Naturalness of Religious Ideas: A Cognitive Theory of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Justin L. Barrett, "Exploring the Natural Foundations of Religion," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 4, no. 1 (2000): 29–34, https://doi.org/10.1016/S1364-6613(99)01419-9; Robert N. McCauley, *Why Religion Is Natural and Science Is Not* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

of evolved human psychology."[28] Cognitive scientists suggest that the same evolved adaptations that humans have developed in order to interact with their surroundings and with other humans result in certain mental mechanisms that set human minds up to be optimally predisposed to develop and transmit ideas about deities and other superhuman beings.[29] Because these mental mechanisms are not culturally specific, they can help explain why similar ideas occur cross-culturally. As Aku Visala explains:

> At least some mechanisms of the human mind are resistant to cultural variation. No one denies the obvious fact that individual minds are significantly shaped by their cultural and social context, everything from language to cultural practices. However, some information-processing tendencies can be observed across cultures. These can be utilized to explain pan-human cultural tendencies, such as religious ideas and practices.[30]

In other words, CSR explains why, though deities are a "specific subclass of cultural concepts that individuals learn from their parents and peers," at the same time, "gods around the world exhibit many recurring features that correspond to deeper cognitive processes."[31] For example, across cultures, superhuman beings are represented as agents with minds, that care about what humans do or do not do, and that have superhuman powers.[32] This includes deified objects, qualities, and attributes.

Specifically, CSR suggests that deity concepts are dependent on a handful of ordinary, intuitive mental tools, particularly the agency detection device (ADD) and the theory of mind mechanism (ToMM).[33] Agency detection device is a mental tool that enables people to recognize other agents' presence, while ToMM is the mental mechanism that attributes sentience, intentions, and

28 Todd Tremlin, *Minds and Gods: The Cognitive Foundations of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 6.

29 As Tremlin states, humans have a "powerful set of cognitive endowments that make their minds particularly good at producing and transmitting god concepts" (*Minds and Gods*, 10). See also Pascal Boyer, "Religious Thought and Behavior as By-products of Brain Function," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 7, no. 3 (2003): 119–124, https://doi.org/10.1016/S1364-6613(03)00031-7.

30 Visala, "Philosophical Foundations of Cognitive Science of Religion," 35.

31 Purzycki, "Gods," 71.

32 For a survey of these features, see Purzycki, "Gods," 67–79.

33 Tremlin, *Minds and Gods*, 75. On ToMM, see also Sara M. Schaafsma et al., "Deconstructing and Reconstructing Theory of Mind," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 19, no. 2 (2015): 65–72, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2014.11.007.

agency to those beings. Agency detection device and ToMM assist in many "operations of human intelligence—from the attention needed to survive in hostile and competitive environments to the sensitivity and cunning involved in interpersonal intercourse to the conceptual framework behind imaginative thought."[34] These two mental mechanisms, ADD and ToMM, along with other features of human cognition, both lay the groundwork for and promote representations of deities.

Agency detection device enables humans to identify nearby agents and to differentiate between agents, which are unpredictable and potentially helpful or harmful, and objects, which are predictable and usually harmless. Agency detection device is powerful and automatic, operating outside of people's conscious awareness. However, because of these features, it also has a tendency to be hyperactive.[35] For example, when situations occur in which the cause of sounds or movement is ambiguous, ADD will attempt to identify an agent. In most situations, known agents (such as other humans or animals) are detected, and the search ends; however, in some ambiguous cases objects may be attributed agency, or imaginative candidates may be posited.[36] Thus, the search for an agent may cause people to posit candidates when a known agent cannot be identified.

Though evolution has tuned ADD to identify agents, as opposed to objects, ADD is also hyperactive, and actually has a tendency to "*over*-attribute agency to objects."[37] Indeed, Todd Tremlin notes that people "cannot help seeing objects as agents given the proper circumstances."[38] This makes sense, given the much higher consequences of failing to recognize an agent that might harm or help a human being than mistakenly attributing agency to an object, which is a relatively harmless error. Studies over the last few decades have demonstrated that ADD is both extremely strong and pervasive. Agency detection device thus leads people to automatically posit agents to explain events.[39] If an agent cannot be readily identified, then people will often imagine one.

When a stimulus activates ADD, another rapidly functioning, automatic mental mechanism is often triggered: ToMM. Theory of mind mechanism is the ability to interpret others' behavior by attributing mental states that cause their

34 Tremlin, *Minds and Gods*, 75.

35 On the hyperactivity of ADD, see Barrett, "Exploring the Natural Foundations of Religion."

36 See the classic work of Stewart Guthrie, *Faces in the Clouds: A New Theory of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

37 Tremlin, *Minds and Gods*, 77.

38 Tremlin, 77.

39 It should be emphasized that this process primarily occurs at a level below consciousness.

activities to them. It is especially important for social interaction because "theorizing about the existence and causal powers of minds allows us to directly engage with those minds, and perhaps to influence them."[40] Like ADD, ToMM is also hyperactive or hypersensitive. As one cognitive scientist writes, "We are so imbued with this way of viewing the world that we easily transpose it onto other animals, and even occasionally on the inanimate world."[41] Stewart Guthrie explains that ToMM causes humans to conceptualize potential actors "primarily in terms of their minds, not of their physical other directly observable qualities. Moreover minds are separable from bodies, and the category of agent is large and open-ended, extending even to biologically inanimate objects."[42] This occurs despite the intuitive knowledge of ontological categories that is also characteristic of the human mind: when ToMM is attributed to objects or other inanimate beings, the human mind recognizes it as counterintuitive.[43]

How exactly are deity concepts produced by these mental mechanisms? First, deities are conceptualized as agents with minds. Second, deities are counterintuitive. These concepts are intimately linked: it is precisely because of the importance of ADD and ToMM that counterintuitive concepts, especially ones that involve psychological violations or transfers, stand out. Counterintuitive concepts may be defined as those that either "*violate* intuitive expectations

40 Tremlin, 81.

41 Robin I.M. Dunbar, *Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 81.

42 Guthrie, "Anthropology and Anthropomorphism in Religion," in *Religion, Anthropology and Cognitive Science*, ed. Harvey Whitehouse and James Laidlaw, Ritual Studies Monographs (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2007), 49.

43 As Boyer argues, this tendency does not mean that humans' ontological categories are not clearly developed. Ontological categories include such domains as PERSONS, ARTIFACTS, ANIMATE BEINGS, EVENTS, PLANTS, ANIMALS, and ABSTRACT CONCEPTS, and carry with them intuitive assumptions about physical, biological, and psychological domains. Boyer shows that the evidence demonstrates that "(i) ontological categories are clearly represented from the earliest stages of conceptual development, and (ii) even young children acquire knowledge on the basis of quasi-theoretical understandings of the various ontological domains." Thus, he asserts that "from the earliest stages of conceptual development, the projection of animate characteristics onto inanimate objects is counterintuitive (in the precise sense of the term); inasmuch as children (and adults) entertain such representations, they entertain them as salient counterfactual speculations. This simple and clearly demonstrated result should put an end to primitivist speculations according to which various features of religious or, more generally, symbolic, thought consist in a return to some early stage of cognitive development" ("What Makes Anthropomorphism Natural," 84–85, 89).

associated with a given ontological category" or "*transfer* the expected properties of one ontological category to another."[44] One of the most common ways in which counterintuitive concepts violate or transfer these expectations is psychologically, by the attribution of unexpected mental abilities. As Tremlin remarks, "counterintuitive concepts involving psychological violations and transfers are particularly pervasive because … mentalistic explanations of the world are central to human thought and the hyperactivity of ADD and ToMM predispose us to take special note of this set of counterintuitive ideas."[45] However, it is crucial to remember that it is the very fact that humans have clear ontological categories that govern expectations that make counterintuitive concepts memorable.

Further, only certain counterintuitive concepts are successful in the sense that they are enduring, transmitted, and garner the types of special attention categorized as religious. These types of counterintuitive concepts are also referred to as being in the "cognitive optimum" position, or as "minimally counterintuitive concepts." In his work, Boyer analyzes exactly what types of counterintuitive concepts are most likely to become successful religious concepts.[46] First, more successful concepts tend to be minimally counterintuitive, violating intuitive expectations in a limited amount of ways, making them both "attention-grabbing but also coherent and memorable," and therefore easy to remember and transmit.[47] To use Maiden's colorful example, "while a talking snake is minimally counterintuitive, a talking snake that is invisible, made of cashmere, exists in all places at once, and gives birth to zebras, is too difficult to process, recall, or communicate successfully."[48] Second, due to the intuitive ontology with which human minds are equipped, ideas about the superhuman "tend to center around a small catalogue with recurrent features" in most social groups.[49] Third, certain concepts "activate strategic capacities" related to the human dependence upon cooperation within social groups, and are thus "more likely than others to generate high commitment and other psychological and

44 Tremlin, *Minds and Gods*, 88 (emphasis original).

45 Tremlin, 89. On counterintuitiveness, see also Boyer, *Religion Explained*.

46 Pascal Boyer, "Functional Origins of Religious Concepts: Ontological and Strategic Selection in Evolved Minds," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6, no. 2 (2000): 195–214, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.00012. See also Boyer and Charles Ramble, "Cognitive Templates for Religious Concepts: Cross-cultural Evidence for Recall of Counterintuitive Representations," *Cognitive Science* 25, no. 4 (2001): 535–564, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15516709cog2504_2.

47 Maiden, *Cognitive Science and Ancient Israelite Religion*, 49.

48 Maiden, 14.

49 Boyer, "Functional Origins of Religious Concepts," 196.

social effects typical of 'religion.'"[50] According to Boyer, the counterintuitive concepts that achieve this status have three key features: (1) they "*activate a set of ontological categories* that we know are present in normal minds from a very early stage of cognitive development"; (2) they "*specify information that violates intuitive expectations* associated with the relevant ontological category"; and (3) they "also activate *the intuitive expectations that are not violated*, among those associated with the relevant ontological category."[51] Thus, despite their apparent diversity, concepts of the superhuman that achieve success as religious concepts, and are thus enduring and transmitted, tend to be both minimally counterintuitive and built on a limited number of templates.[52]

Because there are only so many ontological categories and corresponding sets of intuitive expectations, the possible templates for producing successful superhuman concepts are necessarily limited.[53] Boyer identifies five categories, including PERSON, ANIMAL, PLANT, ARTIFACT, and NATURAL OBJECT, and three main sets of intuitive expectations, including physical, biological, and psychological expectations, which yield a limited list of fifteen templates that can be used to produce counterintuitive concepts that are optimally constructed to become the objects of religion, or minimally counterintuitive. He thus suggests the following possible templates:

1. PERSON + breach of physical expectations;
2. PERSON + breach of biological expectations;
3. PERSON + breach of psychological expectations;
4. ANIMAL + breach of physical expectations;
5. ANIMAL + breach of biological expectations;
6. ANIMAL + breach of psychological expectations;
7. PLANT + breach of physical expectations;
8. PLANT + breach of biological expectations;
9. PLANT + breach of psychological expectations;
10. NATURAL OBJECT + breach of physical expectations;
11. NATURAL OBJECT + breach of biological expectations;
12. NATURAL OBJECT + breach of psychological expectations;

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50 Boyer, 196.

51 Boyer, 196–197 (emphasis original).

52 Boyer, 197.

53 As Tremlin states, "This also means that all counterintuitive concepts share common templates, rendering them both similar in design and limited in scope. The recurrent features of counterintuitive concepts—recurrent not just within people groups but also around the world—are not due to the concepts themselves but to the ontological templates used to construct them" (*Minds and Gods*, 92).

13. ARTIFACT + breach of physical expectations;
14. ARTIFACT + breach of biological expectations;
15. ARTIFACT + breach of psychological expectations.[54]

Boyer claims that the anthropological record confirms that these are the only templates that produce the concepts that become the object of religion.[55] However, as the examples in this book have demonstrated, another should be added to this list: ABSTRACT CONCEPT + breach of psychological expectations.

Violation of domain-specific intuitions is not the only feature that makes deities special. Concepts produced by the templates are further selected for the type of treatment typically identified as religious when they are combined with other features, such as commitment, moral understandings, group identity, ritual, and special experience. Out of the possible templates, then, particular concepts are especially likely to become socially significant and associated with religion: the ones that activate theory of mind.[56] This is largely due to the prominence of ADD and ToMM:

> survival in our evolutionary past (as well as in the present) required that we interpret ambiguous objects and events firstly as those possibilities that matter most. These possibilities include living things, but especially humans. The result is a perceptual system strongly biased to anthropomorphism. We automatically and involuntarily perceive the world as alive and *Person*-like, interpreting even the faintest cues in terms of human traits. That anthropomorphism is so often mistaken does not negate its role or power as the fundamental default assumption, nor does knowing about it make it go away. Designed to extract the safest and most relevant

54 Boyer, "Functional Origins of Religious Concepts," 198–199.

55 These ideas are also echoed in the work of Pyysiäinen and Tremlin. Pyysiäinen argues that what have generally been called "gods" (or sometimes "extrahuman entities" or "superhuman agents") are best described as "counterintuitive agents" that are counterintuitive in certain ways that make them both readily comprehensible cognitively, while simultaneously having counterintuitive features that make them stand out, or make them special (*How Religion Works*, 20). Or, as Tremlin puts it: "Widespread counterintuitive concepts … turn out to share a specific, well-balanced structure … properties that, from a cognitive perspective, are actually quite ordinary are matched with the properties that make them extraordinary. This structural combination of ordinary and extraordinary properties is key to the attraction of counterintuitive concepts" (*Minds and Gods*, 87).

56 As Tremlin writes, "It is very difficult to talk meaningfully about gods without drawing on *Person* terms" (*Minds and Gods*, 95). He summarizes: "A cognition-based account of religious concepts advances the idea that anthropomorphizing gods inevitably follows from parsimonious ontological kinds …. Gods are said to be entities that think, desire, and communicate—a slate of properties characteristic of sentient beings" (99).

> information from every encounter, our minds inevitably gamble on the most significant interpretation.[57]

Because of the preeminence of entities that activate ToMM, Boyer argues that three out of the fifteen templates he proposes are especially likely to be transmitted as religious concepts: the templates of (1) PERSON with breach of physical expectations; (2) PERSON with breach of biological expectations; and (15) ARTIFACT with transfer of psychological expectations.[58] This study also suggests that ABSTRACT CONCEPT with breach of psychological expectations is an important template as well. These in turn become particularly special, or religious, when they are "credited with good access to information" or represented as "full-access strategic agents."[59] Or, to return to Guthrie's theory, religion centers on the same objects that garner the most attention generally due to humans' evolved mechanisms for understanding their environments: other beings with minds that are capable of interacting with human beings.[60]

As Boyer, Tremlin, Benjamin Grant Purzycki, and other cognitive scientists argue, the most critical feature attributed to deities is therefore mind, not anthropoid form.[61] Typically, even though humans are not the only beings with minds, the concept of mind that humans use as a reference point is the human mind. These factors lead cognitive scientists to suggest an understanding of the category of deity that highlights this key feature: in other words, "gods are first and foremost intentional agents, *beings with minds*."[62] Of course, deities are not just intentional agents. They are also minimally counterintuitive, which is what

57 Tremlin, 99 (emphasis original).

58 Boyer, "Functional Origins of Religious Concepts," 201.

59 Boyer, 202, 207. By "full-access strategic agents," Boyer means that they are agents who are thought of as "always having access to whatever information [people] represent as relevant to social interaction." This does not necessarily entail, as he points out, that these agents are always construed as wiser than humans; in fact, the opposite is frequently the case (206–207).

60 Tremlin, *Minds and Gods*, 100.

61 See Tremlin, 101: "First, though anthropomorphism implies that supernatural beings are represented as having human features and displaying human characteristics, the only absolutely critical and unquestionably ubiquitous humanlike attribute ascribed to gods is that they have *minds*. Of course, many gods are described in broadly human terms—some eat, have bodies, live only in specific locations, are quick to anger, and so on—but the slate of human attributes given to gods are either as diverse as people themselves or, in some religious traditions, wholly absent." See also Theiss Bendixen and Benjamin Purzycki, "Peering into the Minds of Gods: What Cross-cultural Variation in Gods' Concerns Can Tell Us about the Evolution of Religion," *Journal for the Cognitive Science of Religion* 5, no. 2 (2020): 142–165, https://doi.org/10.1558/jcsr.40951.

62 Tremlin, *Minds and Gods*, 102 (emphasis original).

makes them so special and memorable.[63] In other words, cognitive science suggests that deities are counterintuitive intentional agents that a group believes exist, whose existence or actions are detectable by people, and who motivate changes in human behavior.[64]

With this understanding of how ideas about deities and other superhuman agents develop, this chapter can return to the objects, qualities, and attributes that are treated as deities in the evidence from the ancient Near East. The previous chapters presented a number of examples of manufactured objects, as well as abstract qualities and attributes, that are treated as divine in texts from Mesopotamia, Ebla, Alalakh, Emar, and Ugarit, as well as in texts such as Esarhaddon's Treaty with Baʿal of Tyre, inscriptions from Taymāʾ and Kuntillet ʿAjrud, the Aramaic archives from Elephantine, and the Hebrew Bible. The evidence suggests that these types of deity fit nicely into the category of minimally counterintuitive, intentional, somewhat humanlike agents with minds that inspire specific human behaviors.

For example, a variety of manufactured objects, particularly possessions of gods such as drums, harps, crowns, thrones, and weapons, are the recipients of offerings in texts from a number of periods in Mesopotamia. The fact that these entities were given this attention indicates that these entities were thought to have humanlike minds, at least insofar as they could be pleased by, or at least be aware of offerings, and potentially respond to them with favor.[65] Larger structures, such as cities and temples, are attributed functions appropriate to intentional agents capable of having an effect on humans in personal names.[66] In Ebla, Crown/Two Crowns and City are significant members of the pantheon, with multiple local manifestations. These entities too are the recipients of offerings, demonstrating that they were thought of as cognizant beings who desired such gifts and could be pleased by them. Crown/Two Crowns also occurs as a theophoric element in personal names that attribute active agency to this

63 Pyysiäinen, *How Religion Works*, 21.

64 Justin L. Barrett, *Cognitive Science, Religion, and Theology: From Human Minds to Divine Minds*, Templeton Science and Religion (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2011), 96.

65 Despite her assertion that most "non-anthropomorphic" gods in the evidence from Mesopotamia were imagined as inactive and devoid of personality, even Porter admits that "the elaborately ritualized presentation of food offerings even to gods that entirely lack personality suggests that all Mesopotamian gods were understood to be living beings endowed with awareness and feelings" ("Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum," 188).

66 Personal names with temples as theophoric elements include the Neo-Assyrian names *Ešarra-šarru-uṣur* ("O [temple] Ešarra, protect the king!") and *Esaggil-iddinna* ("the [temple] Esagil has given [an heir]"). See ch. 2.

entity.[67] In Ugarit, Censer and Lyre are the recipients of offerings in at least one major festival, attesting to their conceptualization as cognizant agents that could appreciate sacrificial meat.[68] Esarhaddon's Treaty with Baʿal of Tyre attests to the conception of Bayt-ʾil and ʿAnat-Bayt-ʾil as active and potentially violent agents capable of recognizing and cursing the violators of a treaty.[69] These are just a few of the examples discussed above in this book.

At the same time, that these entities were indeed thought of as objects (whether confined to a particular physical object or not) is evident in many cases. For example, the presence of determinatives appropriate for objects, sometimes in conjunction with the divine determinative, is a clear indication that an entity was thought of as an object.[70] The use of the dual form for Crown/Two Crowns may indicate that it was imagined as an object with two parts or as two objects.[71] The depiction of the winged disk as an object on the Tayma' stela suggests that it was probably imagined in this form.[72]

A number of divine or royal qualities and attributes are also treated as deities in texts from different locations. Exactly how these entities were imagined is not always clear. Were they epithets of other gods with humanlike forms? Were they names of anthroform gods that are etymologically related to common nouns that describe qualities they were thought to possess? Or were they imagined as deified qualities or attributes? In whatever form they were imagined, these too are consistently described as cognizant agents. In Elephantine, several qualities or attributes of YHW and *byt'l* are given offerings, and they function as agents in personal names.[73] Qualities and attributes, such as Princeliness, are included in god lists from Fara in the third millennium, showing that they are categorized in these texts similarly to gods imagined in humanlike form.[74] Yet the evidence does not indicate the form in which these entities were imagined. Were they represented physically, as McCarter suggests con-

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67 The personal name *en-na-a-gú*, which belongs to several individuals in the Ebla texts, can be translated as the vocative expression, "Mercy—Crown!" (see ch. 3). Other personal names also describe Crown as an active agent: Crown gives, protects, and delivers in various personal names (Pomponio and Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla*, 22).

68 Censer and Lyre receive offerings during the festivals of *Ṣapunu* and *Ḥiyyāru* (see ch. 6).

69 See ch. 7.

70 For example, the writings of Censer and Lyre have two determinatives each in the Akkadian version of the list RS 20.24 from Ugarit ($^{d.dug}$BUR.ZI.NÍG.NA and $^{d.giš}$*ki-na-rù*), and the writing of City appears to have both the determinative for a geographic location and the divine determinative in MEE 10, 3 v. XI from Ebla 1–4 (^{d}*á-lu*$^{\langle\langle ki\rangle\rangle}$).

71 See the argument presented in ch. 3.

72 As argued by Dalley, "God Ṣalmu and the Winged Disk," 87–88. See also ch. 7.

73 See ch. 8.

74 Examples include "High Esteem(?)" (^{d}nám-nir), and "Princeliness(?)" (^{d}nám-nun), which

cerning Yahweh's Asherah being represented as a wooden pole?[75] If so, then these entities also fit well into Boyer's fifteenth template for counterintuitive beings (ARTIFACT + breach of psychological expectations). Or were they imagined in more abstract forms? Boyer does not include abstract objects or qualities in his list of templates, which may suggest that his list is overly narrow, as discussed above. In theory, since the main quality of deities is the attribution of mind, any special object, whether a physical artifact or an abstract quality or concept, should be a possible candidate.[76]

To summarize, previous interpretations have raised a number of questions about the conception of these deities. Objects, qualities, and attributes do not mesh well with biblically influenced conceptions of "real gods" as anthroform, and objects as powerless. Scholars have struggled to understand how the ancient people who produced these texts could simultaneously give religious attention to both objects, such as harps or drums, and anthroform gods. Did the ancient scribes in Mesopotamia have a different definition of deity that doesn't fully match up with the definition of the English word? Were these objects, qualities, and attributes only thought of as quasi-divine beings or semi-independent deities, rather than "real" deities? Were these entities merely mediators between the transcendent gods and the physical world? Were the minds capable of thinking of these entities as gods simply different from modern scholars' minds?

All of these suggestions focus on the apparent incongruity between ancient concepts of deity and modern ones. These are exactly the sorts of questions to which an approach informed by cognitive science can offer answers: by explaining how this phenomenon might work. As Tremlin suggests, "Because the salient feature of gods is that they are thinking, acting minds, practically everything can become part of a religious worldview."[77] The evidence indicates that these deities are all attributed at least some humanlike qualities, particularly humanlike minds and psychological qualities. In this way, they are similar to gods with humanlike forms.

Further, Boyer shows that the same set of basic templates that produce concepts of gods as persons with unusual physical or biological properties (such as immortality, omnipotence, or invisibility), also produces concepts of deities as, for example, artifacts with psychological properties (such as a crown

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are included in the Fara God List, as noted by Selz ("Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp," 171–172). See ch. 2.

75 McCarter, "Aspects of the Religion of the Israelite Monarchy," 143–149. See also ch. 7.

76 See the discussion of "special objects" in the next section.

77 Tremlin, *Minds and Gods*, 102.

that appreciates offerings). Thus, research in CSR demonstrates that the main feature deities share is the attribution of humanlike *minds*, not anthropoid forms. Moreover, the mental mechanisms and templates that produced ancient concepts of deity, including concepts of deity that include objects, qualities, and attributes, are the *same mental mechanisms and templates* that produce modern god concepts. As Tremlin points out, this concept of counterintuitive agents "is open to a wider range of relevant representations, such as (seemingly) impersonal counterintuitive forces and other notions of superhumanity or transcendence encountered in religion."[78] Though agency, epitomized in humans' minds by other humans, may be humanlike, it may not necessarily indicate that a particular entity was conceptualized as humanlike in every other way as well, as the evidence from the ancient Near East clearly demonstrates.

Yet, objects, qualities, and attributes are generally less prominent in ancient Near Eastern pantheons than gods and goddesses with humanlike forms. If the same mental mechanisms produce all these concepts of deity, why aren't deified objects, qualities, and attributes equally as popular as anthroform gods and goddesses? The answer may lie in their position along the continuum of cognitive optimality and costliness.[79] Cognitively optimal concepts adhere more closely to intuitive expectations, while those that are less intuitive are more costly, and therefore more difficult to transmit and remember.[80] In other words, "the more intuitive a given belief or concept, the more natural, effortless, and optimal from the perspective of the mind."[81]

For example, Maiden has shown that the concept of the divine cult statue is one in which an ARTIFACT is attributed special cognitive properties, making it a minimally counterintuitive concept that is, in some ways, cognitively optimal.[82] However, the divine cult statue activates two competing systems of thought: the one associated with its identity as an ARTIFACT, and the one associated with the qualities it is attributed as a PERSON. Because the expectations for these two categories differ so strongly, though it is cognitively optimal in certain ways, it is a costly concept as well: "although the notion of a divine statue is only minimally counterintuitive, the counterintuitive features come

78 Todd Tremlin, "Thought and Emotion in the Scientific Study of Religion: A Critical Review of Ilkka Pyysiänen's *How Religion Works*," *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 3, no. 3 (2003): 256, https://doi.org/10.1163/156853703322336689.

79 See Maiden, *Cognitive Science and Ancient Israelite Religion*, 12.

80 Harvey Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity: A Cognitive Theory of Religious Transmission*, Cognitive Science of Religion (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 2004), 49–59.

81 Maiden, *Cognitive Science and Ancient Israelite Religion*, 8.

82 Maiden, 184.

with a cognitive cost, insofar as they run counter to the powerful intuitions delivered by the default artifact systems. In this sense, the belief in divine cult statues is not entirely intuitive and therefore is modestly costly."[83] The same can be said for deified objects, qualities, and attributes such as those discussed in the preceding chapters. Though they are minimally counterintuitive, and therefore somewhat cognitively optimal, they also appear to be more cognitively costly than deity-concepts that involve anthroform gods, and therefore more difficult to transmit and remember. The more person-like a deity is, the easier it will be to mentally represent interacting with that deity, whereas it may be more mentally effortful to imagine interacting with an object or abstract quality, even if they are attributed minds and agency. This may be one reason why the latter are less prevalent. Indeed, as Maiden has convincingly demonstrated with regard to divine cult statues, ancient people may have also found such deities a bit difficult to grasp, comparatively speaking.

3 Why Deify These Objects, Qualities, and Attributes?

Research in CSR suggests that both conceptions of deity that focus on anthroform gods and goddesses and those that include nonanthroform objects, qualities, or attributes stem from the same basic mental mechanisms, rather than radical differences in cognition. Yet, the doctrines of Christians, Jews, and Muslims tend to denigrate the latter type of deity, while people in the ancient Near East readily incorporated them into their pantheons. This difference is unsurprising, given the scriptural polemics against deifying objects in the Bible and the Qur'an. Features of the social and natural environment inspire and affect religious beliefs, including concepts of deity. Consequently, variations in deities' forms and specific qualities are to be expected in different societies, since deities "flexibly attend to novel perturbations of the social order," in other words, "factors in the social and natural environments in which people live."[84] Thus, one might profitably ask the question, what factors in the social and/or natural environments of the ancient Near East created the conditions under which such concepts could develop? Why were certain objects, qualities, and attributes treated as deities, but not others? This section speculates on how these questions might be answered.

83 Maiden, 209.
84 Purzycki, "Gods," 80.

Cultural ideas can become "natural" with repeated exposure.[85] The cultic environment of the ancient Near East centered around physical representations of deities.[86] Cult statues were not only perceived as *representing* the divine, but also to *be* themselves divine, after undergoing rituals that served to animate them, such as the *mīs pî* ("mouth-washing") and *pīt pî* ("mouth-opening") rituals.[87] Only rarely was the iconic form of cult supplanted by aniconic forms (and such efforts were probably often largely unsuccessful, if one reads between the lines of the extensive biblical polemics, for example). In the context of this religious environment, it makes perfect sense for the deification of objects to extend beyond cult statues to other types of objects. Indeed, as Selz remarks, "no distinctive feature could be found that functionally separates the divine images proper from 'cultic objects.'"[88] In other words, it is culturally plausible within the religious world of the ancient Near East for objects to be treated as divine, as well as being cognitively natural. Moreover, many objects in the ancient Near East were perceived as having some degree of agency: for example, amulets had apotropaic functions for the people who wore or were buried with them, foundation deposits protected buildings, and curse figurines enacted harm on the person with whom they were associated.[89] Yet, as the above discussion demonstrates, this does not mean that the attribution of agency to objects (or abstract qualities or attributes) was not also somewhat problematic for ancient thinkers.

The ancient Near East is not the only context in which ideas developed about "special objects." Tyler Greenway defines "special objects" as "objects with counterintuitive properties or counterschematic causal effects that a group of people reflectively believe exist, that have a type of existence or action that is detectable by people, and whose existence motivates some differences in human behavior as a consequence." Not only does this definition fit the deified objects discussed in this book, as Greenway points out, "people across cultures and religious traditions maintain beliefs about certain objects they consider sacred or special."[90] Numerous factors contribute to the treatment of certain objects as special. For example, they may be treated differently from similar,

85 McCauley, *Why Religion Is Natural and Science Is Not*, 29.

86 See the references in ch. 1.

87 On the "mouth-washing" and "mouth-opening" rituals in Mesopotamia, see the references in ch. 1.

88 Selz, "Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp," 167.

89 On the agency of these and other objects in the ancient Near East, see Downes, "Agency," 334–336.

90 Greenway, "Special Objects," in Barrett, *Oxford Handbook of the Cognitive Science of Religion*, 191, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190693350.013.10.

ordinary objects because they have a long history of being considered special or due to social pressure to treat them in special ways.[91]

The cognitive study of religion also suggests some reasons why certain objects are attributed counterintuitive properties. Typically, objects and agents occupy two different ontological categories in human cognition. Though both objects and agents exist in specific temporal and special locations, objects are characterized by a lack of agency and intentionality, unlike agents. Special objects deviate from these expectations in various ways, either by taking on the characteristics of entities that occupy different ontological categories, or by possessing the ability to create counterschematic causal effects, or both. For example, a statue that can smell and hear violates the intuitive expectations for the category of OBJECTS by taking on the capacities of PERSONS. On the other hand, in the Catholic tradition holy water does not violate domain-specific intuitions about water (it's still liquid and wet), yet it is considered capable of extraordinary effects that other types of water cannot duplicate, such as conference of blessing.

But at what point do such objects become superhuman agents, such as deities? One possibility that has been suggested is to consider counterintuitive special objects that are attributed mentality or animacy as superhuman agents.[92] However, this solution may not go far enough. According to Justin Barrett's "simplicity principle," people tend to simplify counterintuitive concepts as much as possible. Thus, an object that has many counterintuitive properties may be more efficiently conceptualized as a PERSON that violates expected biological properties, rather than as an OBJECT that violates expected psychological properties.[93]

Why are certain objects more likely to be conceptualized in this way than others? According to Greenway, "given the enhanced memorability of coun-

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91 Greenway, "Special Objects," 191.

92 Greenway, 195–197. However, other scholars note that "even mundane or ordinary objects and images can (and do) possess agency in social relationships, functioning as *persons* or *social others* in their interaction with human beings" (Pongratz-Leisten and Sonik, "Between Cognition and Culture," 17, emphasis original). See also Guthrie's thesis that "all manner of phenomena are potential agents" ("Anthropology and Anthropomorphism in Religion," 52). This view is also picked up by Gell in his famous book, *Art and Agency*.

93 Barrett, "Coding and Quantifying Counterintuitiveness in Religious Concepts," 308–338; Greenway, "Special Objects," 198. See also the similar statement in E. Thomas Lawson and Robert N. McCauley, *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 102: "Those entities which are incapable of agency from the perspective of common sense, but which are, within the framework of a religion's conceptual system, capable of ritual agency, are categorized before the operation of the action representation system as (ritual) agents."

terintuitive PERSON concepts, agential special objects associated with certain agents may share similar mnemonic advantages."[94] This would explain why many of the objects that are deified in the ancient Near East are the possessions of gods or royalty. Greenway further suggests that objects acquire superhuman qualities in three major ways: (1) "direct action by a supernatural agent," (2) "ritual action," or (3) "contagion."[95] The evidence from the ancient Near East supports this thesis. For example, an object, such as a deity's weapon, may be believed to have been forged by a deity. Alternatively, an object can be changed into a special object through the performance of religious rituals in which the object is the patient, such as the *mīs pî* or *pīt pî* rituals. Third, divinity could spread to an object, either by direct contact with a deity, or, as Selz suggests concerning deified cultic objects in third millennium Mesopotamia, by virtue of their service in a cultic context.[96]

Another possible reason why objects, particularly cultic objects, were deified may be more pragmatic than those discussed above. Hundley examines musical instruments that play a role in cultic rituals, and that are occasionally themselves deified. He suggests that, rather than being divinized due to their association with deities or because of their own intrinsic power, cultic objects were deified for "practical purposes": "labeling them deities pragmatically gave the instruments affective power to fulfill their essential purpose."[97] This would help to explain why such objects were only deified occasionally and in specific contexts. Another possibility is that these objects were deified as a way to ensure they were treated with special care.[98]

4 Directions for Future Research

One of the key questions that recent research in CSR has asked is: "Which types of special objects are most common in religious systems?"[99] The description of the evidence in specific historical contexts in this study focused on objects, qualities, and attributes that are treated as deities in texts from Mesopotamia, Ebla, Alalakh, Emar, Ugarit, as well as first millennium texts from the Levant, North Arabia, and Elephantine, contributing this dataset to the discussion.

94 Greenway, "Special Objects," 200.
95 Greenway, 201.
96 Selz, "Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp," 168.
97 Hundley, "Divinized Instruments and Divine Music," 125.
98 Brett Maiden (pers. comm.).
99 Greenway, "Special Objects," 210.

However, the study of this widespread phenomenon need not be limited to these areas. Future studies might broaden the range of evidence by incorporating textual and archeological evidence not covered here. For example, this study has, for the most part, not addressed depictions of deities in nonhumanlike forms in the archeological record, which would no doubt add valuable material concerning this phenomenon. In addition, objects, qualities, and attributes are also treated as deities in other areas of the ancient Mediterranean and beyond. For example, the *ỉtn*, or sun-disk, which is attested in ancient Egypt, may be another example of an object or symbol that is characterized as a deity, as emphasized by the common use of the article appropriate to objects in Akhenaten's inscriptions (*pȝ*).[100] In addition, especially in the Late period in Egypt, the mouth-opening ritual that served to animate objects, such as cult statues, was also performed on other objects, including temples and cultic objects.[101] Further attention to the evidence from Anatolia would also enrich future discussions of this phenomenon. For example, objects such as temples and parts of temples, and parts of the home, such as the hearth, doors, doorbolts, and windows, as well as divine qualities, were sometimes treated as deities according to Hittite texts, whether marked by the divine determinative or otherwise addressed as divine.[102]

As Alfred Gell has famously argued, "the immediate 'other' in a social relationship does not have to be another 'human being.'" Further, as he points out, "social agency can be exercised relative to 'things' and social agency can be exercised by 'things.'"[103] The chapters above have demonstrated that objects, qualities, and attributes treated as deities in the ancient Near East are attributed agency. Thus, Gell's thesis is born out by the evidence from the ancient Near East. Yet, important questions remain to be answered concerning this phenomenon. Do deified objects, qualities, or attributes associated with a deity (or powerful human agent, such as a ruler) have entirely independent agency? Or is their agency connected to that of the god or goddess with whom they are

100 See Goldwasser, *Prophets, Lovers and Giraffes*, 111–131. See also Richard H. Wilkinson, "Inanimate Object Deities," in *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 236–240.

101 Hundley, *Yahweh among the Gods*, 104–105.

102 Ben H.L. van Gessel includes a number of potential examples. Van Gessel, *Onomasticon of the Hittite Pantheon*, 2 vols., HdO 33 (Leiden: Brill, 1998). On parts of the home, see also Volkert Haas, *Geschichte der Hethitischen Religion*, HdO 15 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 249–293. On the deification of *parā ḫandandatar*, a quality associated with deities, see Gerd Steiner, "Gott. D. Nach hethitischen Texten," *RlA* 3:565. These examples are also briefly discussed in Hundley, *Yahweh among the Gods*, 63, 66, 88, 79, and 98.

103 Gell, *Art and Agency*, 17–18.

associated? Do they possess what Gell refers to as distributed agency, with the gods to whom they belong as the ultimate referents?[104]

For example, it has been argued that though objects may serve as indices that presence the divine, they possess only secondary agency, rather than primary agency.[105] However, this distinction may be overstated: as chapter 1 argues, agency is better understood as a continuum.[106] Moreover, the chapters above examined a number of cases where gods and their possessions appear together, each receiving their own offerings. If the ultimate recipient was the gods, then it is unclear why one would have bothered to present offerings to the objects as well. Moreover, not every object that is treated as divine is clearly associated with a god or goddess: for instance, Lyre and Censor at Ugarit do not seem to have belonged to any particular deity, so it is not evident which deity, if any, they would have indexed. On the other hand, deities that are closely linked to a possessing or associated god, such as *ʿnt-yhw*, may represent secondary agency. Yet, the present author could not detect a significant qualitative difference in the agency that objects, qualities, and attributes are attributed in the ancient texts compared to anthroform deities. This suggests that in the ancient Near East, there may not have been such a distinction. Rather, it seems that objects, qualities, and attributes differ from anthroform deities less in terms of the type of agency they are attributed, and more in terms of the duration or relative permanence of this agency. For example, gods and goddesses such as Ištar and YHW are always considered divine, while objects, such as drums, lyres, and crowns, or qualities, such as sacredness, are only sometimes considered divine.[107]

Other important questions warrant further study as well. How exactly were such deities imagined by different groups? Did religious specialists and lay people share the same ideas about deified objects, qualities, and attributes, or did

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104 See also Pongratz-Leisten and Sonik, "Between Cognition and Culture," 17–24; Pongratz-Leisten, "Divine Agency and Astralization of the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia," 137–187. Richardson also asks similar questions regarding divine emblems: "Were the emblems perceived as entities operating on behalf of or as extensions of their gods (i.e., as secondary agents)? Or were they seen as entities independently capable of causation?" ("Crowns of Their *bābtum*," 636).

105 See Pongratz-Leisten and Sonik, "Between Cognition and Culture," 20–21. They further suggest that the extent to which objects were attributed agency has to do with their linkage with the bodies of deities, arguing that "things or materializations linked with the physical *body* or its capacities, as the statue, specific body parts, the voice and dream visions, and even the name as an index of personhood of the divinity seem to represent a fuller spectrum of the *agency* of a particular divinity" (emphasis original).

106 See also Hundley, *Yahweh among the Gods*, 30n101.

107 See also Hundley, "Divinized Instruments and Divine Music."

they differ? For example, did lay practitioners tend to be less likely to share beliefs about deified objects? Cognitive scientists have proposed some empirical studies that may be able to suggest answers to some of these questions.[108] The continued study of these deities as part of ancient Near Eastern religions will no doubt also have much to contribute to this ongoing discussion.

108 Greenway, "Special Objects," 204.

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CULTURE & HISTORY OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Volume 144

This book analyzes examples of objects, qualities, and attributes treated as deities in ancient Near Eastern texts spanning the second and first millennia BCE. Specifically, this cross-cultural study examines attestations of this phenomenon in texts from Mesopotamia, Ebla, Alalakh, Emar, and Ugarit, as well as first millennium inscriptions, Aramaic texts from Egypt, and the Hebrew Bible. Through the application of recent research in cognitive science of religion and prototype theory, the book concludes that these types of deities are natural products of the human mind.

JENNIFER SINGLETARY, Ph.D., is Assistant Research Professor of Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies and Jewish Studies at the Pennsylvania State University. She is the co-editor of *Uses and Misuses of Ancient Mediterranean Sources: Erudition, Authority, Manipulation* (Mohr Siebeck, 2022).

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